NATUR CYMRU

A Review of Wildlife in Wales

Rhif/Number 17 • Winter/Gaeaf 2005/06

Recovering nature:

- sand lizards • polecats
- bearded tits • coedlannau
- Wentwood forest • Aberleri fields
- Monmouthshire meadows

NATUR CYMRU
A Review of Wildlife in Wales

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NATUR CYMRU CYNNWYS • CONTENTS

Golygyddol / Editorial ..... 2 - 3
James Robertson

People and nature at Moelyci ..... 4 - 10
John Harold

Sand lizards - back in Wales and liking it ..... 11 - 15
Graham Williams

Monmouthshire meadows ..... 15 - 17
Caroline Howard & Diana Bevan

Time to fly the flag for the polecat ..... 18 - 22
Kate Williamson & Johnny Birks

Aberleri fields - paradise regained ..... 23 - 27
Mike Bailey

Coedlannau ym Mharc Cenedlaethol Eryri ..... 28 - 31
Efan Milner

Bearded tits one, bitterns nil ..... 32 - 33
Tony Pickup

Saving Wentwood - Wales' largest ancient forest ..... 34 - 38
Rory Francis & Jon Winder

Gwylio môr-wenoliaid Ynys Llanddwyn ..... 39 - 41
Richard Farmer

NODWEDDION ARFEROL / REGULAR FEATURES

Silff lyfrau amgylcheddol / Green bookshelf Glenda Thomas / James Robertson ..... 42 - 43

Cymru a'r byd / Wales and the world Hannah Pitt ..... 44 - 45

Islands round-up Geoff Gibbs 46

Nature at large Frances Cattanach 47

Hysbysfwrdd / Noticeboard Mandy Marsh 48

NATUR CYMRU GOLYGYDDOL

Gan fod poblogaeth dyn ar y ddaear yn prysur gynyddu, a chan fod yr awydd am dwf economaidd yn gwneud newid yn yr hinsawdd yn fwy tebygol, hawdd iawn fyddai teimlo'n brudd. Fel heulwen, mae optimistiaeth yn beth anodd iawn dod o hyd iddo yn ystod y tymor hwn.

Felly, braf iawn yw gweld bod ymdrechion caled pobl leol a Coed Cadw wedi diogelu coetir hynafol mwyaf Cymru ar gyfer y dyfodol. Ar hyn o bryd, mae dan orchudd o gonifferau, ond yn ystod y blynyddoedd nesaf fe fydd ardal Coed Gwent yn cael ei thrawsnewid trwy gyflwyno coed hynafol – gyda chymorth cenhedlaeth o blant yr ardal.

Mae hanes grŵp o bobl o Sir Fynwy yr un mor galonogol. Maen nhw wedi dod ynghyd i reoli eu dolydd er budd bywyd gwyllt. Wrth gwrs, mae mynd ati i wneud hyn yn anos na'r disgwyl, ond mae darganfod yr hyn y dylid ei wneud a sut i fwrw ymlaen â'r gwaith wedi dod â grŵp mawr o bobl ynghyd, ac mae'r tir glas blodeuog sydd wedi deillio o hyn oll yn gymaint o wledd i'r llygaid ag unrhyw ardd ffurfiol. Hefyd ceir hanes arwrol cymuned fferm fynydd yn yr ystyr ehangaf, sy'n cofleidio natur a phobl ac sy'n cynnig cyfarwyddyd mewn ecoleg dyn.

Sioc fawr oedd clywed bod Derek Ratcliffe wedi marw'n sydyn yn gynharach eleni ar ei ffordd i'r Lapdir – lle a oedd mor agos at ei galon.

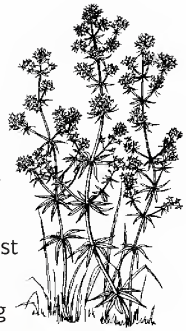
Roedd yn fwyaf cartrefol allan yn y maes, yn dringo clogwyni er mwyn chwilio am nythod cigfrain, neu'n dowcio dan raeadrau er mwyn chwilio am redyn Cilarne ym mynyddoedd gogledd Cymru. Roedd egni Derek yn ddiddiwedd. Oherwydd ei waith arloesol ar effeithiau plaladdwyr ar hebogiaid tramor, ei 'lyfr dydd y farn' ar safleoedd bywyd gwyllt, ei swydd fel Prif Wyddonydd y Cyngor Gwarchod Natur a'r llu o bapurau a llyfrau a ysgrifennodd – er enghraifft y rhai hynny sy'n sôn am hebogiaid tramor a chigfrain – caiff ei ystyried fel un o naturiaethwyr mwyaf dylanwadol ei oes.

Bu ei ddylanwad ar genhedlaeth o ecolegwyr yn fawr. Llwyddodd i ysgogi pobl i ddal eu tir a siarad o blaid byd natur. Dros ugain mlynedd yn ôl, ysgrifennodd ddogfen o'r enw *Nature Conservation in Great Britain*. Teitl y bennod olaf oedd 'The courage of conviction', ac ynddi dywed Derek bod rhaid i'r ymarferwyr ymddwyn fel pe bai cadwraeth yn rhywbeth sydd o wirioneddol bwys, os yw cymdeithas gyfan i ymboeni, fel y dylai, am warchod natur. Rhaid i gadwraethwyr sefyll eu tir yn gadarn a dadlau eu hachos yn argyhoeddiadol, a hynny gan eu bod yn gwirioneddol gredu yn yr hyn y siaradant amdano a chan eu bod wedi ymrwymo'n llwyr iddo. Ym marn Derek, mae gweithredoedd yn drech na geiriau.

Gweithredoedd da sy'n sail i gynnwys y cylchgrawn hwn sydd wedi gwneud y gwaith o'i roi ynghyd mor bleserus. Boed ni'n dysgu am sut mae'r ffwlbart arni, yn olrhain llwyddiant madfallod y tywod sydd wedi eu hailgyflwyno, neu'n clywed am y titwod barfog cyntaf i fridio yng Nghymru, mae yma ymrwymiad mawr i'w gael y tu ôl i bob stori. Mae'r straeon yma'n galonogol iawn, gan lwyddo i godi'r ysbryd a'n rhwystro rhag canolbwyntio ar y peryglon amgylcheddol a wynebwn a'r diffyg ymrwymiad a welwn ar ran y rhai a ddylai gynnig arweiniad ar faterion difrifol o'r fath.

James Robertson

NATUR CYMRU EDITORIAL



With a burgeoning human population, and the hungry desire for economic growth making the most pessimistic forecasts of climate change seem the most likely, it is easy to be gloomy. Optimism, like sunshine, can be hard to come by at this season.

So it is a tonic to learn that the determined efforts of local people and Coed Cadw Woodland Trust have secured Wales' largest ancient woodland for the future. Currently under a blanket of conifers, the next few years will see a transformation of Wentwood, a revival of a great ancient wood, helped along by a generation of local children.

Equally encouraging is the story of a group of people in Monmouthshire who have got together to manage their meadows for wildlife. This is easier said than done, but finding out what to do and how to do it has brought a large group of people together, and the flower-rich grasslands which have resulted are a reward as satisfying as any formal garden, and less laborious. Then there is the heroic tale of a hill farm community in the widest sense, embracing nature and people, and providing instruction in human ecology.

Rory Francis

The Curley Oak, Wentwood

It was a shock to hear earlier this year that Derek Ratcliffe had died suddenly on his way to his beloved Lapland. Most at home in the field, whether climbing crags to look for raven nests, or ducking under waterfalls in search of Killarney fern in the mountains of north Wales, Derek's energy was daunting. He has been described as the most influential naturalist of his generation, for his pioneering work on the effects of pesticides on peregrines, his doomsday book of wildlife sites, his leadership as Chief Scientist at the Nature Conservancy Council and his many papers and books, such as those on the peregrine and the raven.

His influence on a generation of ecologists was profound; he made it respectable to stand up, and speak out for nature. Over twenty years ago he wrote the document *Nature Conservation in Great Britain*. He called the final chapter 'The courage of conviction', and wrote: "If nature conservation is to gain the acceptance it deserves as a relevant concern for the whole of society, its practitioners all have to behave as though it really matters. Conservationists must argue their interests and their cases with a firmness and conviction which stem from a visible belief in and commitment to the things they talk about... Posterity will judge us by deeds and not words."

It is good deeds which provide the material which has made putting this magazine together such a joy. Whether it is making discoveries about the progress of the polecat, tracking the success of reintroduced sand lizards, or the bonus of Wales' first breeding bearded tits, dedication and commitment lie behind these stories. I find them heart-warming, and a good antidote to gloomy thoughts about the environmental dangers we face, and the absence of commitment on the part of some who should be showing leadership on these issues.

James Robertson

John Harold

When a local community bravely took on the management of a mountain farm three years ago, it provided a wonderful opportunity not only to conserve the farm's rich ecology, from the glories of upland heath to the array of other habitats, but also to establish a new set of human relationships, the human ecology. A dynamic Environment Centre has emerged from competing human interests and perspectives. JOHN HAROLD gives a personal account of the hard but immensely rewarding and enlightening journey on which people and nature have embarked at Moelyci.

We're in this together: **People and nature at Moelyci**

What on earth is going on at Moelyci? Something remarkable. An ordinary hill sheep farm has, through three fraught and occasionally miraculous years, taken on a new identity as Moelyci Environmental Centre.

Moelyci Farm

Moelyci Farm is a traditional sheep farm: the house and extensive farm buildings are surrounded by generally small, walled fields, but behind the farm the ground rises until it reaches a great expanse of heathy ground. This is Moelyci mountain, and 230 acres of it belong to the farm which is now owned by the Moelyci Environmental Centre Industrial and Provident Society (Moelyci IPS). The Society is a form of co-operative, with membership open to all. It has 370 shareholding members, the majority of whom live within walking distance of the farm, and lies between three villages – Rhiwlas, Tregarth and Mynydd Llandegai – about four miles south of Bangor.

Moelyci mountain consists of upland heath and forms a 'gateway' to the Eryri SSSI and SAC. The remainder of the farm has substantial lowland heath, unimproved acidic grassland, and a small area of improved lowland grassland. The mountain dominates the farm in terms of both area and location, but it is the lowland where the Moelyci enterprises and projects are concentrated.

For most people involved at Moelyci, the mountain is a precious symbol and a special place, though it remains distant from the bulk of everyday activity. It is home to fine heathland habitats, and an abundance of heathland wildlife. A walk on the mountain will bring you into the world of the stonechat, meadow pipit, and skylark; on a good day you may see red grouse, chough, cuckoo, whinchat, or one of the many species of raptor which hunt the heathery slopes. The mountain has a long history too, from the ancient funerary on the summit to the continuing tradition of gathering *llus* (bilberries) in summer.

Moelyci Environmental Centre

At its simplest, Moelyci is an attempt to provide opportunities for people and the natural environment to flourish. But this means very different things to different people, of course, and that's one of the really big challenges.

The Centre's constitution states that it exists for:

- the protection and promotion of the natural environment
- the advancement of education
- the provision of recreational facilities in the interests of social welfare
- the relief of unemployment
- the provision of opportunities for rural community regeneration.

That some progress has been made towards all of these is now beyond doubt, though progress has been faltering, slow and difficult.

An important feature of the Moelyci 'model' is that it is based on the value of land. Not the financial value, but the opportunities and challenges which

Joyce Fleur

Welsh Blacks investigate work on the new bird hide

the ownership and management of land offer. Moelyci is a place where people can feel at ease in a landscape with which they have a direct link, through shared ownership and responsibility. It has succeeded in widening the opportunity to enjoy that sense of 'rootedness' which is normally the preserve of a privileged few.

However, for a large group of people to suddenly come together to own a farm requires a significant paradigm shift. Within Moelyci and in the outside world, it has been a challenge to understand what is taking place.

How did it start?

Back to early 2002. The farm was up for sale and a group of people came together to try to buy it. We all had our own mental image of what the Environmental Centre might be, and that added up to a lot of different images. It is not surprising that what followed has not been easy.

We inherited a slate hillside which was anything but a clean slate, with the varied history of the farm etched deep into it, and habitats and wildlife communities long-established. The real clean slate was ours, the human one, people starting from scratch to organise ourselves and set out together on an unfamiliar path.

The starting point was a series of public meetings in local villages. It is still possible to recapture the

Joyce Fleur

Hard work on an allotment

John Harold

John Harold

"The Open Day in May 2004 was another defining moment..."

feeling of that time. People were divided: some filled with excitement and idealism at the possibilities which fired the imagination, others suspicious, sceptical, or antagonistic. Some felt a mixture of these emotions.

I came to one of those early village hall meetings and was enthused, if a little bewildered by the narrow focus groups which seemed to be pre-ordained and established. Wasn't there more substance to the vision of land management than just planting trees? There didn't seem to be a place in the scheme where conservation of wildlife or wider land management issues could be addressed. This was a problem for me, but I felt unsure of the situation and was hesitant to speak out at first. Many people will have been put off by this early stage, which must be a loss.

A brief history of a rollercoaster ride

The public meetings in 2002 were a catalyst, and very soon people were at work planting potatoes, tending the garden, harvesting hay – working together, enthusiasm and idealism bubbling over.

Work began on a grant-funded community woodland and tree-planting project, but differences soon began to surface. Money brings trouble, it is said, and this money came too early for an organisation which needed to understand itself before spending money which made a big impact on the land. By January 2003 a discontent gripped the centre, inhibiting wider progress, and struggles for control were symptomatic of deepening personal divisions.

April 10th 2003 – Moelyci Farm was finally bought by the holding company. It should have been a day of celebration, but by now the mood was sombre. In March and April 2003, fires started by vandals burnt much of the mountain; a dramatic symbol at a time when hopes seemed to be going up in smoke.

Early 2004 saw the establishment of the first allotment field next to the farmhouse. As people started to work on their plots, the allotments became a symbol of our hopes, embodying the positive potential which originally drew us together. The Open Day in May 2004 was another defining moment, a day when we had a chance to look at our successes and see that there was still much worth fighting for. The sun shone and people came in their hundreds.

By early summer 2004, however, the financial situation was grim. Benefactors showed faith and bailed out the ship, and within weeks our fortunes improved. A successful bid to the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund paid off some capital, and gave resources for conservation work. Importantly, in this bid we worked together to 'sell' the bigger picture of Moelyci, and saw that this was something which other people valued enough to support.

Throughout the rest of 2004 and into 2005, projects grew and developed in their various ways. We were learning how to work together, day by day, one problem at a time. Individuals continued to give enormously of their time and effort and skills. This investment is the most remarkable thing which has come out of Moelyci – remarkable because we knew that in April 2005 the short-term bank loans would end, and the holding company would have a year to sell the property. If the Environmental Centre could not raise the necessary finance, all our efforts would go to waste.

But we did it! By June 2005 the farm had been bought by Moelyci IPS, with very little fuss, just quietly acknowledged. A peculiar combination of exhaustion and a 'can-do' attitude made this momentous leap seem no more than another small and inevitable step on the road. Within the last year Moelyci has matured enough to start coping with its own ambition and complexity.

What is happening now?

Two years on from the fires, the mountain heathland is regenerating beautifully and the wildlife is fast returning. Skylark numbers have rocketed, as expected, with the shift from tall heather to a shorter grassier post-burning sward. Whinchats bred in 2005, for the first time in at least 12 years. We are hopeful too that the special assemblage of heathland invertebrates is recovering, including the moth specialities Ashworth's Rustic *Xestia ashworthii* and Weaver's wave *Idaea contiguaria britanniae*; the latter is an endemic subspecies known from just a handful of upland heathland sites in northwest Wales.

Myriad subtle shifts in the farm's wildlife are taking place. Long term residents in the lowland such as greater butterfly orchids and green woodpeckers (and their food the yellow meadow ants) seem to be continuing to thrive, supplemented by apparently new arrivals such as a colony of small pearl-bordered fritillaries on the ffridd. On the negative side, a long period without grazing may have been too much for our tiny colony of butterworts *Pinguicula vulgaris* at the top of the ffridd; we could not find any this year.

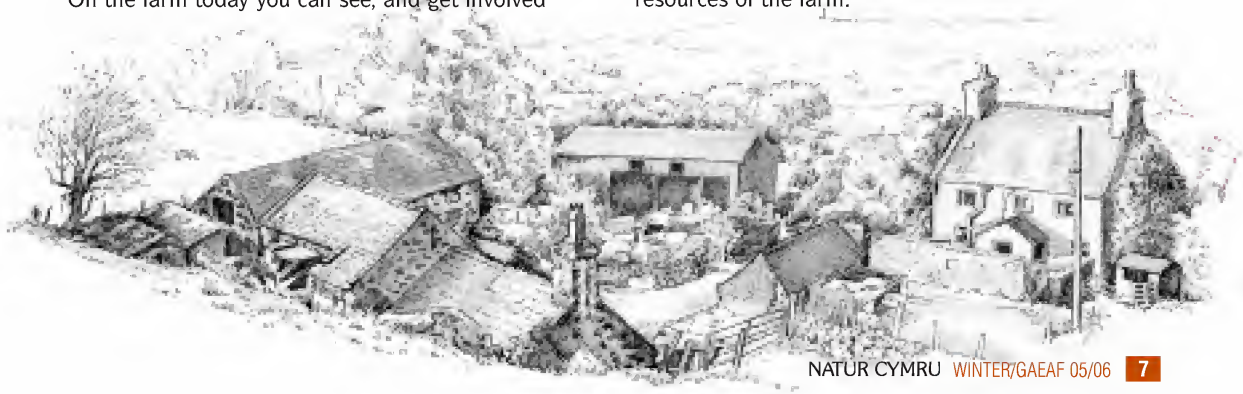
On the farm today you can see, and get involved

John Harold

Weaver's wave moth

with: two fields of community allotments, substantial areas managed for conservation, a green waste composting site, the Celli Barddoniaeth (poetry spinney), a tree nursery, an archaeological excavation, a seed-crop trial for farmland birds, and various greenwood craft projects. There are regular public events and training opportunities, formal and informal, in a wide range of areas spanning archaeology, crafts, arts, biodiversity, conservation and wildlife. A market garden is currently being set up and plans are in progress for a children's nursery. There is also an Intermediate Labour Market project which offers full time placements for previously unemployed people to learn land management skills, wider work skills and gain work experience.

These diverse elements are not the grand plan, they are simply projects which have been moved forward by individuals and groups under the Moelyci umbrella. If there is a grand plan, it is to make it possible for such individuals and groups to succeed, to open up opportunities for a broader range of people, while nurturing and using the natural resources of the farm.



This is what has evolved over three years; but it could easily have turned out quite differently, depending on how fate brought people, events, and interactions together.

True lovers' knot moth

Intrinsic and extrinsic problems

Looking back now, it is clear that two things happened simultaneously but with little co-ordination. We began to use the land, to manage it (often the default management of doing nothing) and to make plans for it, but at the same time we were trying to establish an organisation, with objectives and structures, from scratch.

From the beginning, the Moelyci project was a high-risk one in all kinds of ways. This may have put off some of the level-headed practical people who were most needed!

Popular approaches to 'conservation' have created challenges of their own. The familiar 'tree planting good, sheep bad' idea has had to be unpicked a little to allow us to move on to a more appropriate management vision. At the same time, the 'conservationists' have had to deal with some uncomfortable compromises and work in some unfamiliar situations, perhaps to the benefit of everyone. Not everyone appreciates the needs of, for example, a specialised group of invertebrates; but it has been essential to establish the principle that the natural resources are the starting point. This cannot be taken for granted: as anyone who has moved house must know, there is a strong human urge to make one's mark.

In this context the programmes of wildlife events have been an invaluable tool, to give other Moelyci members and the wider public a chance to experience for themselves the wildlife and habitats of the farm. There have been many memorable highlights so far: the short-eared owl which graced one of our marshes on an autumn bird-watch, the spring carpet of primroses and violets on the ffridd, extraordinary fungi such as the parasitic bolete and the scarlet caterpillar fungus on an autumn foray, ivy blossom covered in red admiral butterflies, and the exquisite diversity of colour and form of moths around a moth light. Through these experiences, and the discussions about the needs of wildlife, ecology and land management which stem from them, a better understanding of the need for informed management has developed at Moelyci.

The classic problem of conservation being seen as an expensive luxury has both internal and external elements. Grants for short-term capital projects are relatively easy to come by, while grants for long-term conservation management are more elusive. As farming payments start to come in, land management is making a visible contribution to income, but wider demands on that income will divert it away from land management. This is the standard 'agricultural support as income support' scenario, familiar to farmers of all kinds.

Guided walks are popular

John Harold

Another extrinsic problem has been the credibility gap, unavoidable for a new organisation, especially one which has gone through some fairly public internal struggles. After bouncing off a few brick walls, the credibility gap is healing well, as dogged persistence pays off and we begin to create something of recognisable value for people and nature.

Two parallel ecologies

The previous management system (a 600 ewe sheep farming system) ended when the farm changed hands, and an erratic and piecemeal management replaced it. The existing habitats responded to this in various ways, but in a sense the natural communities had a head start on our human community, as our 'ecology', the way we worked together, had to start from nothing. These, then, are the two distinct ecological trends.

Wildlife

At the beginning, the improved fields thickened to good hay crops, using up the short-lived legacy of annual nitrate applications, and as the nutrients were depleted the slow process of re-diversification of these pastures was set in train. An improved field was ploughed to grow potatoes and unleashed a superb diversity of arable weeds from the seed bank, including nationally declining species such as field woundwort *Stachys arvensis* and corn spurrey *Spergula arvensis* (now Red Data listed due to severe national declines), and the extraordinary exotic thorn apple *Datura stramonium*. These weeds fed a large flock of linnets (and a few yellowhammers and reed buntings) through the following winter. Elsewhere, withdrawal of grazing triggered a free-for-all among the competitive species, and an accumulation of nutrients and biomass. The net effect was a trend to diminished botanical diversity. It is not quite as simple as that, however, and some species began a recovery from previously intense grazing pressure.

Human

At the beginning, the human community at Moelyci struggled to establish itself. A few pioneers occupied the available niches. The immigration of new people

John Harold

Moelyci members in the farmyard

was substantial, but many of the incoming 'species' needed resource-rich and sheltered conditions and were unable to establish. Soon the pioneer species were competing for the usable habitat, which was limited in extent. A few more species managed to gain a tenuous foothold, but the increase in diversity was slow. Some deposits of grant-guano encouraged lush growth, but some of these withered as the richness was leached out. Slowly a more complex community began to develop, at a cost to some of the pioneer species, which are intolerant of competition. At Moelyci today a range of life-strategies are in evidence, making better use of the available resources.

Lessons learned?

Developing a new human community is an ecological process in which different life-strategies compete and accommodate. It takes time. Diversity, like-mindedness and single-mindedness are all essential but conflicting characteristics, and the conflicts they bring are inevitable but, on the whole, solvable.

The balance of short-term gain and long-term aims is particularly challenging, and can be hugely influenced, for both better and worse, by the 'fertiliser' effect of grant injections.

It is crucial to recognise the difference between the land, which came fully tenanted with wildlife communities, and our organisation, which had to start from scratch.

Where are we today?

- Plans being developed for the children's nursery were unveiled at the Open Day in July 2005.
- Moelyci is once again registered as a farm and the hens have been joined by a small herd of pedigree Welsh Black cattle.
- As I write, new fencing is going up on Moelyci mountain, funded by Natur Gwynedd Implementation Fund, to allow us to re-establish management on the precious heathland in 2006.
- On the allotments vegetables are being harvested, and plans made for next year.
- The bird hide is nearly complete, a beautiful structure fashioned from local wood and bound together with oak pegs.
- In the lowland seed field, flocks of linnets are already feasting. Some of these linnets may have been raised in the nests on Moelyci mountain – another chance to help home-grown talent to flourish.

Early October, and we have just had the annual fungus foray. Over 130 people came and enjoyed the freedom of Moelyci, and brought together a great diversity of earthy treasures, the fruits of their efforts in the fields.

Come and see for yourself.

***John Harold** is Moelyci Environmental Projects Manager and chair of Moelyci Management Board (as with much of the work at Moelyci, these are voluntary positions); his 'day job' is as an ecological consultant. Other roles; Anglesey Lepidoptera Recorder and co-editor of the annual North West Wales Lepidoptera Report.*

Bu'r daith yn faith ar Foelyci...

Gweledigaeth fawr a yrrodd criw o bobl, rhyw dair blynedd yn ôl, i ymgymryd â rheolaeth fferm Moelyci, ar gyrion gogleddol Eryri. Gwelwyd cyfle ar y darn tir hwn i greu adnodd cyfoethog i fywyd gwyllt ac i bobl fel ei gilydd. Y cyfle hwn a roddai werth gwirioneddol i'r tir, ym marn y rhai a ysbrydolwyd i sefydlu'r fenter gymunedol hon, ond roedd yr her o geisio diwallu gwahanol ddyheadau ac anghenion yn anferthol.

Cyflawnwyd cryn dipyn dros y blynyddoedd diwethaf, ond bu'r daith yn boenus ar brydiau. Roedd gwead ecolegol wedi hen sefydlu ar y tir, ond proses anodd ac araf oedd creu cymuned o bobl o'r newydd a dysgu cydweithio'n adeiladol. Cafwyd arian i'w wario cyn i'r gyd-ddealltwriaeth ffurfio'n llawn, a daeth rhaniadau i'r amlwg yn gynnar yn hanes y fenter.

O edrych yn ôl, gellir gweld bod y buddsoddiad o ran amser ac arian wedi bod yn rhyfeddol ac mae wedi talu ar ei ganfed. Sefydlwyd pob math o brosiectau dan ymbarél Moelyci - rhandiroedd cymunedol, safle compostio, celli barddoniaeth, meithrinfa goed, cloddfa archeolegol, ac ati. Mae hyfforddiant hefyd yn elfen bwysig o'r fenter, o gyrsiau celf i reolaeth tir ac mae nifer fawr o gyfleoedd yn cael eu creu i ddenu'r cyhoedd i fwynhau'r bywyd gwyllt ar y tir.

Ac mae hwnnw'n werth ei weld, yn flodau gwanwyn ar y ffridd a ffyngau lliwgar yn yr hydref, yn wyfynod amrywiol ac anghyffredin ac yn chwyn tir âr gyda'u heidiau o linosiaid barus - a llawer mwy.

Does dim amheuaeth bod gwersi pwysig wedi eu dysgu yn ystod y dair blynedd ddiwethaf. Un o'r pwysicaf ohonynt, efallai, yw mai proses hir o gystadlu ac addasu yw datblygiad cymunedol!

Sand lizards – back in Wales and liking it

All images: HCT

Male sand lizard on marram grass, a typical habitat

Wales has some great examples of the sand dune habitat favoured by sand lizards, so it was a particularly sad loss that fifty years ago this handsome animal became extinct here. To put matters right, sand lizards were brought back to Meirionydd ten years ago, with surprising and exciting results. We are starting to find out much more about this rare reptile, and why it is thriving in Wales, as ***GRAHAM WILLIAMS*** *reports.*

The majority of visitors coming to Morfa Harlech during the summer head straight down through the dunes to its long golden beach, armed with a bottle of sun tan lotion and a beach towel. The adventurous among them take a walk though the undulating dunes to gaze at the flower-rich grasslands and slacks, which support such a profusion of vivid colour and form. But for the last decade a little encountered new arrival has remained largely unnoticed, hidden within the marram of the sun-baked mobile dunes.

The sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* is the most beautiful, and also the most endangered, of our three native lizard species. Larger and somewhat stockier than the common lizard, it is characterised by an attractive pattern of dark spots with light centres (ocelli), over a background of brown or grey. Males are particularly striking during the breeding season when they signal their virility by developing vivid green flanks.

The sand lizard is Britain's only egg-laying lizard. The eggs, laid in late May to June in burrows dug into the sand, are incubated by the heat of the sun. The clutch often numbers from 4 to 14 and the young hatch in late summer. There are three regional races of sand lizard in the UK which

Male sand lizard in breeding colours

During the winter months sand lizards hibernate in burrows, remaining in a torpid state before re-emerging in milder weather, usually between March and May. They can often live for up to 12 years, though many will die at the early stages of life, perhaps taken by predatory birds or dying during hibernation.

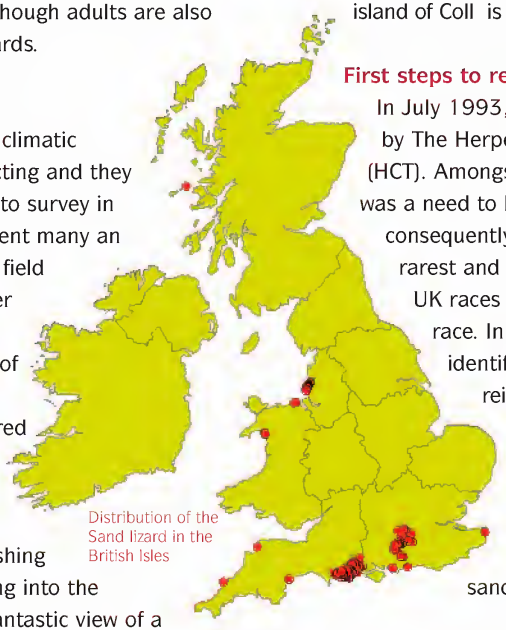
The sand lizard is now found naturally only on scattered heathland sites in Dorset, Surrey, Hampshire and on the sand dunes of the Sefton coast, Merseyside. The principal reason for its decline has been the massive loss of its habitat during the 20th century when large areas of heath and coastal dune disappeared under housing development, mineral workings and agricultural expansion. It has been reintroduced to Berkshire, West Sussex, Cornwall, Devon and north Wales, in recognition of the fact that it used to have a much wider range. A long established introduction on the Hebridean island of Coll is still in existence.

differ in appearance, with populations in the Weald and Dorset being generally darker than the Merseyside population further north.

Sand lizard populations are often centred on topographical features known as foci, such as banks or dense tussocky marram dunes, and are mainly active during bouts of warm weather when they bask and hunt for a variety of invertebrates such as spiders and grasshoppers, though adults are also known to prey on young lizards.

Keeping their heads down

As I found to my cost, their climatic requirements are quite exacting and they are not the easiest animals to survey in dense tangled marram! I spent many an hour at the start of my first field season on site tramping over sun-baked dunes, with nothing to show at the end of the day except aching legs, exhaustion and a beetroot red tan! Eventually I got a feel for the right conditions, and the hard work paid off when I was rewarded by flashing glints of vivid green scurrying into the marram, and eventually a fantastic view of a basking male. To see a lizard requires a lot of patience!



Distribution of the Sand lizard in the British Isles

First steps to recovery

In July 1993, a pilot study was completed by The Herpetological Conservation Trust (HCT). Amongst the various goals identified was a need to boost the captive breeding and consequently the overall population of the rarest and most endangered of the three UK races of sand lizard - the Merseyside race. In particular, Morfa Harlech was identified as a priority candidate for reintroduction; and a new captive breeding vivarium at the home of a leading Lacertid ("True lizards") breeding expert in West Sussex was to be instrumental in the return of the sand lizard to Wales.

Historically, the sand lizard had an almost uninterrupted range up the west coast of Wales, along the

north coast and around the Wirral, finally connecting with the extensive dune systems north of the Mersey. Logically, therefore, the Merseyside race appeared to be the most appropriate for reintroduction into north Wales.

Hatchlings were first released in 1995

Why Morfa Harlech?

Morfa Harlech SSSI encompasses more than 2000 hectares of stunning coastal habitat and supports rich assemblages of flora and fauna. The site is also considered to be one of the largest accreting dune systems in the UK.

The Merseyside sand lizards are most commonly seen on mobile frontal dunes. This has led to the belief that this is, in fact, their preferred habitat. However, a trapping study of small sites has demonstrated that even more dense populations can exist in much more fixed habitats. This is subject to these relatively fixed systems still bearing marram grass as their primary vegetation and the availability of open sand for hibernation and egg incubation.

A study of Harlech showed that much of the system met all of these criteria with a series of accreting mobile frontal dunes together with semi-fixed and fixed dunes with frequent blow-outs running in a north-south direction. Frequent breaks through the dunes, together with gulleys and ridges, provide numerous suitable south facing slopes. This system looked ideal for sand lizards, sitting well within the known historical geographical range of the lizard. Although there had been no historical records at Harlech itself, and a number of intensive surveys revealed no existing population, this may simply have been attributable to the dynamic nature of coastal habitats.

Between April 1995 and September 2002 some 187 young lizards were released at two separate locations on the southern part of the site. These proved highly successful despite the often challenging Welsh weather which on one occasion left HCT staff huddling together for four hours in a biting wind waiting patiently for the sun to come out to do a release!

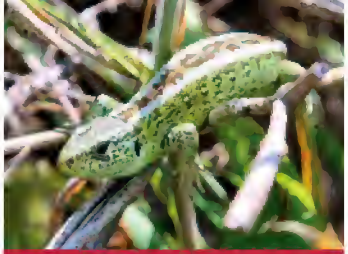
Expansion of the population

Monitoring at Morfa Harlech to assess the results of this first reintroduction was of great interest. The first visit was made only two years after the first release, and the news was good. A number of hatchlings were seen close to the first release site, one of which even posed for a photograph. These hatchlings were the first truly native Welsh sand lizards for half a century.

Subsequent surveys recorded the presence of all life stages from hatchlings to adults. In all cases a picture of a healthy and expanding population emerged. In 2003 and 2004 surveys showed that animals had spread further from the two release sites in both directions and that they were within, at most, 500 metres of the two populations joining to form a single colony. In June of this year a number of sand lizard burrows were seen some 100 metres north of the access path in virgin territory!

Sand lizards are very difficult to see in dune habitat and even the most experienced surveyor will readily

Optimal habitat at Morfa Harlech



Madfall y tywod yn cael hwyl yn Harlech

Madfall y tywod - yr harddaf a'r prinnaf o'r tair rhywogaeth frodorol o fadfallod ym Mhrydain. Dioddefodd yn enbyd wrth i'w chynefinoedd tywodlyd ddiflannu yn ystod yr 20fed G ond ers 1995 mae wedi darganfod cartref newydd ar dwyni Morfa Harlech.

O'r tair tras ranbarthol o fadfallod tywod ym Mhrydain, tybiwyd mai un Glannau Merswy a wynebai'r perygl pennaf, nôl ar ddechrau'r 1990au. Roedd Morfa Harlech yn cynnig lleoliad addas ar gyfer prosiect ailgyflwyno, yn enwedig o ystyried yr hen gysylltiad a fyddai wedi bodoli rhwng twyni glannau Merswy ac ardal ddosbarthiad hanesyddol y madfall tywod o gwmpas gogledd a gorllewin Cymru.

Er nad oedd y madfallod wedi bod yn bresennol yng Nghymru ers y 1940au ac er nad oedden nhw wedi cael eu cofnodi yn Harlech, roedd y cyflyrau ar dwyni Morfa Harlech yn ymddangos yn berffaith ar gyfer y creadur, gan fod yma gymysgedd o flaendwyni a thwyni sefydlog gyda digon o lethrau deheuol a thywod agored ar gyfer torheulo a deor wyau.

Hyd yn hyn, mae'r ailgyflwyno wedi bod yn llwyddiannus. Gollyngwyd 187 o fadfallod rhwng 1995 a 2002 ac amcangyfrifir fod y boblogaeth wedi cynyddu i ryw 600 erbyn hyn.

admit that they walk past far more lizards than they actually see - and this refers to the lizards that are up and about rather than in the depths of vegetation or their burrows. As a consequence, numbers seen on any visit are extremely low. The range of life-stages and distribution give a better indication of a colony's status than any attempt to extrapolate from the numbers seen. This in turn makes it very difficult to estimate the size of a colony. Following generally agreed calculations it is currently estimated that, at the very least, the population at Morfa Harlech is in excess of 600 individuals and is expanding northwards.

Possible future trends and research projects

Our knowledge of sand lizard behaviour, ecology and distribution on Morfa Harlech is far from complete. To date, the monitoring effort has been focussed on open habitats adjacent to reintroduction locations, with the assumption that more fixed habitats are less suitable due to the lack of bare sand for egg laying and basking.

While the reintroduction has been and continues to be a major success story, as yet we are unclear as to what factors make this dune system so special. With the help of staff at HCT and Chester Zoo, we aim to build on our current knowledge by extending surveillance and monitoring to less marram-dominated and fixed habitats within the remainder of the site. Modelling of sand lizard behaviour and climatic and topographical factors should help us build a picture of what exactly has been so conducive to the successful spread of the species and help inform us of any possible trends in population expansion over the next decade and beyond.

Encouraged by the Morfa Harlech experience, a second reintroduction of sand lizards, to sand dunes at Talacre in Flint, has recently been carried out, and this should improve our understanding of the ecological requirements of sand lizards within dune habitats.

The mountains of Eryri rise abruptly behind the golden arc of dunes at Morfa Harlech, at the northern end of Cardigan Bay. It is a suitably stunning location for the return of the native: sand lizards are now back in Wales, and they mean to stay. The population is expanding and there is plenty of suitable mobile, marram-dominated habitat available to the north of the reintroduction locations. There is every reason to hope that the sand lizard population will continue to grow rapidly and naturally and, correspondingly, so will the number of people that are lucky enough to see them.

Graham Williams *is CCW's Senior Reserve Manager for Coed Lletywalter, Morfa Harlech and Morfa Dyffryn National Nature Reserves in Meirionydd.*

Maggie Biss

Benign neglect produces results

Monmouthshire Meadows

Flower-filled meadows were once a familiar and enchanting backdrop to rural life. A victim of intensive grassland management, their best hope may lie with landowners who are motivated by a love of nature. A large and diverse group of people who live in Monmouthshire have shown how rewarding it can be to work together to conserve this wonderful habitat, as ***CAROLINE HOWARD*** *and* ***DIANA BEVAN*** *report.*

Recently, our 81st member filled in an application form for herself and her husband. Answering the question of what skills they could offer the group, she did not proffer their years of experience in education and farming. Instead she cited "a great love of the countryside". This is an answer that all our members could give, and may well be the reason that our Group has gone from strength to strength.

Three of us had been associate members of the Parish Grasslands Group (PGG), which consisted of neighbours in Gloucestershire who had formed an association to manage their land, formerly grazing commons, for conservation. Recognising how valuable such a group could be in Monmouthshire, we invited a team from the PGG to Trellech to talk to local people, which in turn inspired us to form our own Monmouthshire Meadows Group.

Our strategy was different from our mentors'. We were not a group of neighbours working together on a relatively small parcel of land but had set out to give assistance to landowners throughout Monmouthshire. Two of our members, Drs Stephanie Tyler and Caroline Howard, are skilled ecologists and undertook to visit all members, record their grasslands and show the owners how they could achieve what they wanted, for example by cutting hay and grazing at the correct time of year, and removing cut material to decrease the fertility. This enables flowering plants to compete with and grow alongside grasses. Very often there is a seed store in the ground, which will germinate under such treatment – members have been surprised to find what comes up. Sometimes, where land has been intensively fertilised or overgrazed for long periods we introduce seed in green hay, carefully matching the underlying soil conditions of the fields from where we are taking and

donating hay. We do not use commercial seed or material from other parts of the country, which could disturb the local genetic balance and conservation of Monmouthshire genes.

Introducing the meadows

In east Monmouthshire the grasslands cover variable soils and geology including Tintern sandstone and conglomerates in the Silurian series. There is little exposed limestone and most of the grasslands are on neutral brown soils, with some being more acidic and some with impeded drainage. Where these grasslands have been managed as traditional hay meadows, with seasonal grazing or an annual hay cut, they are very flower-rich with a matrix of bent, fescue, sweet vernal, and crested dogstail grasses. They fit into the knapweed-crested dogstail community of grasslands, of which there are three locally common types in the area.

Where the grassland is on damp, acid soils it is named after the heath grass *Danthonia decumbens*. There is an excellent site supporting such grassland at the Poplars in Whitelye, where clouds of white marsh bedstraw contrast with a myriad of pink marsh orchids. This site has to be managed to control invading rush and purple moor grass.

Where the soil is better drained the lady's bedstraw sub-community occurs. At Four Acres, Maryland, this is at its most attractive in July when the greater butterfly orchid is in full flower. This site is managed for hay and care needs to be taken to control invading bracken.

There is also a sub-community named after the meadow vetchling, *Lathyrus pratensis*, which includes many leguminous plants. This occurs especially on old smallholdings where the land has been enriched with intensive grazing in the past. It may be seen at Forest House on Barbadoes Hill. Massive ant hills cover the meadow, attracting green woodpeckers, which feed on meadow ants.

Every meadow is different. One site, a pair of meadows with an old orchard, is at 700 feet above sea level. When the present owners arrived, the meadows had been heavily grazed, although a neighbour thought there might be orchids in the orchard. Each year the owners cut and remove the hay late, and in the past 17 years wood anemones, cowslips, green-winged orchids, bugle, twayblades and common spotted orchids have appeared and spread. In a good year there are now over 70 green-winged orchids, and twayblades and common spotted orchids are too numerous to count.

Introducing our members

Our members are a delight. Ida is in her nineties and joined because she found it was rather difficult to rebuild her rough stone walls by herself! Her plant list was stunning and it transpired that her butterfly orchids were the most numerous in the county. A considerably younger couple thanked us for helping them to have their meadow cut and the hay baled. They followed our advice and fenced it. They have now persuaded the local countryside warden to organise a new stile and place kissing gates at both ends of the footpath which crosses their field.

Maggie Biss

The Poulters' meadow at Trelleck

Jack is a retired farmer who has volunteered his services to Monmouthshire County Council to reclaim the meadows beside the Wye for wild flowers. Keith runs his Wiltshire Longhorns on a wild daffodil field and has donated some of his bulbs so that they can replace the blowsy cultivated varieties which used to grow beside the river. Barbara and Terry are eager to learn more about producing flower-rich meadows and are particularly pleased with their autumn crocuses.

Andrew and Ruth, who own horses, are delighted that they now have their first orchid since altering the management of their paddocks. John and Sandra keep a small herd of Dexters and are willing to lend the animals for grazing. They sell their meat to MMG members on a first come first served basis and it is delicious. Stephanie and Alan find that their prize-winning Exmoor ponies do not harm their rare southern marsh orchids. Steve and Liz are proud of their stunning meadows which attract a great variety of butterflies.

Vera and Geoffrey own the meadows and orchard described earlier. They follow a policy of benign neglect, which has reclaimed overgrazed fields to a point where they have oxe-eye daisies, tormentil, cat's-ears, lousewort, milkwort, innumerable orchids and much else besides. They don't need our advice but they assist our aims by allowing members to visit their meadows to show what can be achieved.

Getting the message across

We have participated in Open Days, demonstrating what can be achieved. We send copies of our annual reports which contain data on the significant flora in our holdings to the Countryside Council for Wales, Monmouthshire County Council and Gwent Wildlife Trust. Our most recent venture (with Gwent Wildlife Trust) has been to make local collections of flowering meadow seed which will be used to help diversify appropriate local meadows and to conserve the genetic form of the species involved.

Green winged orchid

CCW

We have also become members of PONT (Pori Natur a Treftadaeth, the Welsh Grazing Animals Project), and under the guidance of Stephanie Poulter, one of our committee members and a leading light in the Exmoor Pony Breed Society, we will be setting up a conservation grazing scheme. Some members and contractors with Dexter cattle and sheep have already been lending animals to assist others.

Jointly with PGG, we have been grant-aided to buy an alpine tractor and peripheral equipment to make hay and haylage in our small steeply sloping meadows. Where this has been used it has been extremely successful, although we are now having to reconsider the logistics of operating on both sides of the River Wye, particularly as our membership has increased to far-flung areas.

This has been an exciting project and we have been encouraged by the enthusiasm of our members and the support of Gwent Wildlife Trust, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Office, Monmouthshire County Council, the Countryside Council for Wales and local contractors. Our twice-yearly meetings have been convivial affairs with illustrated talks by speakers of the calibre of Owen Mountford and Trevor Dines.

__Caroline Howard__ is an experienced grassland ecologist whilst __Diana Bevan__ was one of the initiators of the Monmouthshire Meadows Group.

Gwarchod Gweirgloddiau Mynwy

Cenhadu ac estyn llaw er mwyn diogelu hen laswelltiroedd cyfoethog yw gwaith Gr ŵp Gweirgloddiau Sir Fynwy. Gall yr aelodau fanteisio ar gyngor arbenigol yngl ŷn â'r planhigion a'u hanghenion a gallant hefyd helpu ei gilydd drwy gynnig sgiliau ymarferol, drwy roi benthyg creaduriaid a thrwy gynnig cyfleoedd i aelodau ymweld â gwahanol safleoedd er mwyn rhannu profiad. Mae galw mawr am wasanaeth yr unigolion hynny sy'n helpu'r aelodau i adnabod y planhigion ar eu tir ac mae'r twf ym maint y gr ŵp yn adlewyrchu poblogrwydd y cynllun cynhyrfus hwn bob ochr i'r afon Gwy.

Kate Williamson

Time to fly the flag for **the polecat**

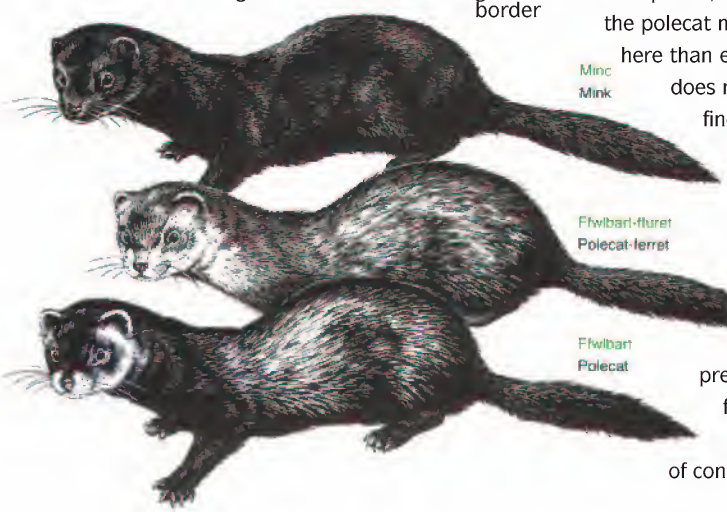
To 'ferret about' implies a restless curiosity in search of something interesting, nicely bringing to mind the lithe domesticated rabbit catcher of that name. Its wild counter-part, genetically so close that the two readily breed together, has a much lower profile, however sharp its instincts and skills as a hunter and predator. With so few top cats amongst our fauna, we should take pride in the 'poultry cat' which has survived in remote places in Wales to spread back across Britain, as ***KATE WILLIAMSON*** *and* ***JOHNNY BIRKS*** *explain.*

The west coast sand dune system of Morfa Dyffryn is a real jewel in the crown of the Snowdonia National Park. Rightly designated as a National Nature Reserve, these two parallel ridges of mobile and fixed sand dunes can reach heights of 60 feet. Thick carpets of fungi can be forayed in the autumn, rich oases of orchids found in early summer and spectacular displays of breeding lapwing seen in spring. Rabbits are a common sight in all seasons across the dunes and the slopes are literally pockmarked with their burrows in some areas. There is, however, another species of animal that is found on the reserve but seldom seen. These nocturnal creatures have long, slim bodies, ideal for slipping down rabbit burrows in search of prey, and very distinctive 'bandit' markings on their faces. They communicate largely by scent, so make little noise, and are more usually associated with lowland, agricultural areas. It is probably due to the high numbers of rabbits that Morfa Dyffryn is also home to a relatively dense population of polecats.

Polecats, like our other native carnivores, have suffered persecution by man, at least since the Middle Ages. There are churchwarden accounts that show bounties being paid for their carcasses at this time. By the mid-19th century this level of trapping had increased, along with the popularity of game rearing and shooting estates. Polecats have always suffered prejudices based on their perceived pest status and habit of emitting an unpleasant odour from anal glands as a defence when

alarmed. Other names for the species include 'foulmart', as opposed to the pine marten which is known as the 'sweetmart'. The origins of the word polecat are thought to be poule-chat, literally 'chicken cat'. In fact, dietary studies indicate that polecats are generalist feeders with the flexibility to specialise on particular groups where prey abundance permits. In most cases in the UK this means rabbits, with some evidence to suggest an increased percentage of commensal rodents over winter, mainly rats collected from around farm buildings. Both of these preferences would indicate that polecats should in reality be seen more as a 'farmer's friend' than a pest.

As with much of our native wildlife, there is a huge lack of awareness of species ecology and even of their existence. Polecat distribution crashed during the late 1800s to a low around 1915. Previously common and widespread throughout mainland Britain, it could then only be found in a couple of little pockets in northern Scotland, Cumbria and a 'stronghold' of about a 60 mile radius around Aberdyfi on the west Wales coast. During World War I persecution levels dropped and there is some evidence of a recovery beginning around this time. However, the species remained scarce until the cessation of commercial rabbit trapping and the increase in rabbit numbers post-myxomatosis. By a 1959-62 survey the species had expanded its range within Wales and begun to recolonise the English border



Kate Williamson

Female polecat tracks in hard sand

counties. Therefore, at a critical stage in the species' history in Britain, Wales provided a vital core refuge for the polecat and enabled it to start repopulating its former range. This recovery has continued, confirmed by a national survey conducted by The Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) during the 1990s and by preliminary results of a current national survey. This latest survey, being carried out jointly by the VWT and The Mammal Society, relies on members of the public sending in records of polecats, usually road casualties. Very importantly, either the body itself or a good photograph is required in order to verify the purity of the animal regarding feral ferret genes.

Bearing in mind the historical significance of Wales to the species, a greater understanding and awareness of the polecat might be expected amongst local people here than elsewhere in Britain. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case. Preliminary findings from a survey being conducted by the Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA) show that awareness of the polecat is extremely low in the area. Pictures of four mammals were shown to people and they were asked to name them. A fox was used as a baseline, with the assumption that pretty much everybody would recognise a fox. The otter was included as another mustelid, but one that has received a lot of conservation attention and press coverage.

Rob Strachan

The other two species were the polecat and an albino ferret. So far, 74 students at the University of Wales, Swansea and 204 children from various primary schools in North West Wales have been surveyed. As predicted, results for the fox were 100% for the students and a close 98% for the school children. Pleasingly high numbers of people also recognised the otter, 97% of students and 70% of school children. Ferrets were well known to the students, 69% identified them correctly, but only about a third of the children could name them. Perhaps not surprisingly, but certainly dismayingly, only just over 3% of children named the polecat correctly and only 26% of the University students. It must be noted here that these students were all from the School of Biological Sciences. Nearly as many of the students thought that the picture was that of a mink (23%), followed by stoat, weasel and ferret. The children, who were all between the ages of 7 and 11, put ferret as their top answer (32%), followed by weasel, badger, beaver and hedgehog. Some of the other answers included such non-natives as the raccoon, skunk and meerkat. These results probably reflect the extremely low occurrence of polecats in popular literature or cultural references, as opposed to other native species. The occurrence of the non-natives is likely to have been gleaned from wildlife documentaries, which often focus on the 'more charismatic' fauna of Africa, Asia or the Americas.

Despite the relatively good news surrounding the recovery of polecats as a species in Wales and the UK as a whole, there are still several issues that need consideration. Polecats are particularly susceptible to road traffic accidents. During seven years of data collection on polecats by the VWT in the 1990s, 700 (68% of the total) were found dead on roads, with two and a half times as many males as females. There are peak times of the year for polecat deaths on roads; spring, when predominantly males are killed during the mating season, and autumn, when many young animals are dispersing. It has been suggested that the patchiness in polecat distribution may be explained by variations in road and traffic density (Birks et al, 1999).

As the evidence from analysis of barn owl carcasses shows, secondary poisoning by rodenticides can have a lethal effect on predators. Second generation anticoagulant rodenticides are the most popular types currently used for controlling rodents on farms in the UK. Polecats can be particularly vulnerable due to their habit of preying on rats in and around agricultural buildings over the winter, when the highest levels of rodenticides are used. Because the animals die underground or in dens the corpses are rarely recovered, making it hard to quantify the problem. Work done on road casualty polecats from the 1990s found 31% with rat poison residues in their livers (Shore et al, 2003). It must be remembered, however, that this figure reflects sub-lethal levels only, as lethally affected animals could not be sampled. Forty per cent of polecats sampled in the period January to June (i.e. following the main period of rodenticide use on farms) were contaminated, and this is probably a truer reflection of the proportion of the population sub-lethally exposed each winter. The size of the lethally affected sector of the population is unknown, but it seems likely that half of all polecats are exposed to rodenticides each winter. Contrary to expectation, this study also found slightly higher levels in animals from Wales compared with those from England, where there is greater use of these poisons. It is worrying that little is known about the sub-lethal effects of rodenticides upon polecat behaviour and reproduction. The VWT plans to continue monitoring this issue in collaboration with The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

Despite the work of the VWT and a few others, there is still little known about polecat ecology and behaviour, especially in habitats other than lowland farmland. In 2003, a one-off polecat survey of Morfa Dyffryn was undertaken by Mamaliaid Eryri and SNPA, using live-trapping methods developed by the VWT. Despite some marking anomalies, between 10 and 16 animals were identified from a 1km square grid. This is more than had previously been found in any other area in the UK. Eight animals were caught during a single night's trapping.

This has sparked a regular monitoring programme of the animals on the site and a study to try and learn more about the population dynamics. All animals are marked with micro-chips, much like those used by vets to identify pet cats and dogs. In this way, individual movements, size and weight changes and condition can be recorded at each trapping session. Sex can be determined fairly accurately by weight, females rarely weighing above 1.05kg and males rarely less than that. Some genetic work has been done to check this methodology and it seems that during the autumn trapping round there is some potential for mis-identifying young males as females, but in general it holds true. The animals that are recaptured over several sessions provide the most useful data for the study and their sex identification, according to weight, becomes apparent over time. This study is still very much in its infancy, but some interesting patterns already seem to be emerging as regards individual movements. Polecats are traditionally thought of as a solitary species, occupying exclusive territories. However, as rabbits are so plentiful on the site, an abundance of food (rabbits) and shelter (burrows) may mean that outside of the mating season it does not make ecological sense for animals to risk injury or waste energy defending territories. Certainly, plotting individual captures on a map shows a great deal of overlap in the minimum home ranges of males in October 2004. There is a lot more work to do here, and it is hoped that, by studying this population over time, new information on polecat spacing mechanisms may be revealed.

Polecats are one of the top predators on Morfa Dyffryn, yet they are one of the least understood and most rarely noticed species. Their ecological role in the fragile dune ecosystem is vital. Rabbits are the primary grazers of the rare floral assemblage, and the polecat is the main predator of the rabbits.

Rob Strachan

Morfa Dyffryn

Kate Williamson

Heliwr dirgel tiroedd Cymru

Rhoddodd Cymru loches i'r ffwlbart ar adeg dyngedfennol yn ei hanes. Oherwydd erledigaeth ddidrugaredd ers y Canol Oesoedd, crebachodd poblogaeth y creadur yn ddifrifol. Erbyn 1915, roedd wedi diflannu o bob rhan o Brydain ac eithrio ambell fan yng ngogledd yr Alban, Cumbria ac ardal o gwmpas Aberdyfi. Wrth i'r erlid leihau yn ystod yr 20fedG, ac yn enwedig wrth i niferoedd cwningod gynyddu, llwyddodd ffwlbartiaid ymledu drwy rannau helaeth o Gymru nes cyrraedd gororau Lloegr erbyn dechrau'r 1960au. Er y cysylltiad hanesyddol, ac er mor arbennig yw safleoedd fel Gwarchodfa Morfa Dyffryn, ger Harlech, ar gyfer y ffwlbart, nid oes llawer o ymwybyddiaeth ymhlith pobl ifanc Cymru o'r creadur hwn, yn ôl arolwg diweddar.

Er bod y ffwlbart ar gynnydd mae sawl ffactor yn peryglu'r creadur; lleddir nifer fawr ar ffyrdd bob blwyddyn ac amcangyfrifir bod tua hanner y boblogaeth yn dod i gyffyrddiad â phlaladdwyr bob blwyddyn sydd un ai yn eu lladd neu efallai'n effeithio mewn rhyw ffordd andwyol ar eu hymddygiad a'u hatgenhedlu.

Mae angen dysgu mwy am ffwlbartiaid ac mae'r gwaith monitro sydd nawr yn digwydd ar Forfa Harlech yn dechrau datgelu gwybodaeth ddiddorol yngl ŷn â phatrwm dal tiriogaeth ymhlith ffwlbartiaid.

Gallai Cynlluniau Gweithredu Bioamrywiaeth Lleol gyfrannu'n fawr at warchod ffwlbartiaid - ond tri Chynllun yn unig yng Nghymru, er mawr siom, sy'n cyfeirio at y creadur.

Mammals in general are secretive and harder to spot. We look for their signs, such as otter spraint, dormouse-opened hazel nuts and badger hair on barbed wire fences. Unfortunately the polecat leaves us few clues; its nocturnal habits mean we seldom catch glimpses of the live animal and painters, authors and illustrators have rarely given space or thought to it in their work. Given the resultant lack of public awareness, the misnomers and the huge gaps in understanding surrounding this recovering species it would seem that there is still a fundamental role to play here for Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs). At present only three LBAPs in Wales contain Action Plans for polecats: Snowdonia, Gwynedd and Torfaen. Surely there is room for improvement for a species with such significant historical links with Wales?

If anyone finds a dead polecat to contribute towards the current National Survey, please contact Johnny Birks at the VWT on 01531 636441 to arrange delivery/collection.

Kate Williamson *is Biodiversity Co-ordinator for Snowdonia National Park Authority.* ***Johnny Birks*** *is Secretary of the Vincent Wildlife Trust.*

Marnel Owen

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Aberleri Fields
paradise regained

All photos: Mike Bailey

Past agricultural drainage and land 'improvement' schemes which fought the grain of nature have often yielded modest gains in terms of agricultural production at high costs to biodiversity. But the era of inexorable habitat loss may be coming to an end. Thanks to a good deal of human sweat, nature has responded to the partial reversal of one such scheme. ***MIKE BAILEY*** *describes how one group of fields is becoming a wildlife paradise.*

In 1820, at a time of canal building and ambitious drainage reclamation projects inspired by Dutch engineers, a scheme was begun to transform the southern flank of the Dyfi estuary and drain what was then viewed as wasteland.

Here, the great bog of Cors Fochno had been steadily accumulating peat for 5000 years. It had first overwhelmed and then preserved the forest, which had once spread across the floodplain. By 1820 a dome of peat had risen some 9 metres above the forest floor level. The pristine bog, sheltered behind the Borth shingle spit and merging naturally into saltmarsh to the north, covered some 6000 acres between Borth and Glandyfi. Studded with islands of upstanding bedrock and snaked across by rivers from the surrounding Cambrian hills, the panorama would have been even more breathtaking than it is today.

The drainage scheme involved the raising of a tidal embankment across the estuarine flats (later to become part of the Machynlleth–Aberystwyth railway line), and the canalisation and embanking of the rivers Clettwr, Leri and Ddu. The original course of the Leri had taken it around the south-west fringe of the bog and out to sea through the dune ridge across the present day Borth and Ynyslas golf links. The new route sliced straight across the western side of the bog from Borth to the Dyfi, creating a 4km tidal channel and isolating the seaward edge of the bog.

The northern end of this dismembered bog remnant is an area of 240 acres called Aberleri fields. It was acquired by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) as part of the Dyfi National Nature Reserve in 1991, and at that time the area could hardly be described as bog. Since its isolation from the remaining bog, the area had been dissected by drainage ditches, ploughed, under-drained, limed, reseeded and heavily sheep grazed, so that little of the original vegetation remained.

Locally, where saline flooding (caused by a breach of the Leri bank) had damaged the agricultural sward, wetland species such as black bog-rush, bog pimpernel and saltmarsh rush had returned, hinting at the botanical potential. Significant numbers of breeding lapwing were also present, drawn by the expanse of bare ground close to the recently refurbished river banks.

Wishing to see off a windfarm proposal in this most inappropriate location, the flushed and fledgling CCW realised it had a rare opportunity to acquire land as much for its restoration potential as for its existing conservation value. This was exciting for me as warden, offering a genuine opportunity to make a wonderful site even better.

Restoration begins

The problem now was how to restore something akin to the original sphagnum bog vegetation which formed the underlying peat, whilst taking account of the recent natural and man-made changes which had deposited calcareous beach sand on the

seaward side and introduced brackish water throughout the ditches which dissect the site.

Part of the solution was, and remains, manipulating the hydrology – controlling water levels. A topographic survey established that the larger field units were essentially slightly plateau-like, with a gradient towards their margins due to the peat shrinkage along the ditch lines. Filling in the ditches would raise the water table, but this would lose the open water and tall swamp vegetation of the ditches themselves, and we needed to avoid flooding neighbouring farmland and a caravan park on our boundary. We also had to ask where, and at what cost, could we obtain suitable material to use as fill? We decided that the best option was to re-profile the main ditch to a broad shallow-edged channel and to use the excavated peat to dam the ditch and construct low ridges or bunds to either side, thereby helping to retain rainwater on the fields. Dams were fitted with adjustable overflow pipes to control water levels and allow for vegetation management.

We have continued to work with the same farmer who held a grazing licence when the site was acquired. Sheep provide much of the grazing but summer cattle grazing is now established over much of the area, to the great benefit of the flora. Re-wetting of the more heavily drained areas has inevitably led to a great increase in soft rush, which needs regular cutting to control its dominance.

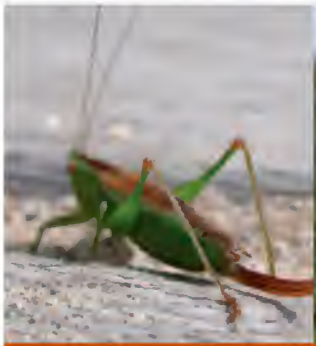
Many characteristic raised bog species have appeared in the sward, including cross-leaved

Aberleri 2003

heath, bog asphodel, common sundew, common cotton grass and white beak-sedge. But also frequent are wet heath and fen species such as marsh lousewort, marsh bedstraw and marsh pennywort. Marsh orchids and the lesser butterfly orchid have also appeared and so too has the local blunt-flowered rush.

A bryophyte survey in 2001 recorded 42 species of mosses and liverworts, including three bog mosses *Sphagnum denticulatum*, *S. subnitens* and *S. papillosum*, suggesting that proper bog conditions, where the only source of nutrients comes from rainwater, are beginning to return. However, towards the western margins, where sand overlies the peat, a number of mildly lime-loving mosses have also appeared, including the two nationally notable mosses *Drepanocladus sendtneri* and *D. polygamus*. In this area there is a good population of the local lesser water-plantain, which also occurs at Ynyslas dunes.

The reversion to a wetter soil and more structured vegetation has benefited many species of birds. Around six pairs of common snipe now breed regularly along with two or three pairs of redshank. Strong populations of teal, reed bunting, reed and sedge warbler, linnet and skylark are maintaining themselves well, and water rail are also breeding. Shoveler and garganey are more sporadic breeders. Unfortunately, lapwing have been unable to maintain a viable breeding population here, where proximity to street lighting and other human



Short-winged conehead

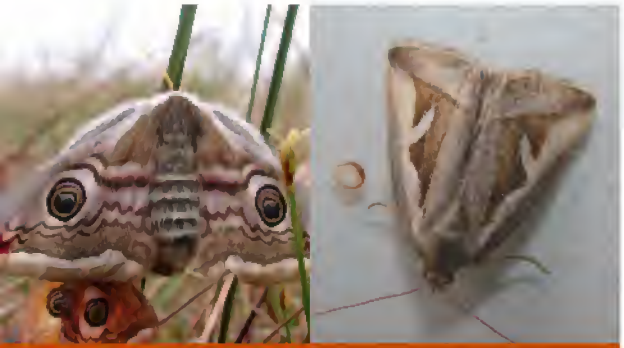
Lesser butterfly orchid

influences seem to favour the predator.

In winter Aberleri can be a good place to see raptors, with hen harriers, peregrines, merlins and barn owls all regular visitors. Short-eared owls are occasionally seen in winter, and ospreys and marsh harriers at migration time. More exotic avian visitors which have delighted birdwatchers have included Montague's harrier and squacco heron.

Patient (or just lucky) visitors have also seen otters right in front of the public hide, and evidence in the form of spraints shows that they are regular visitors, feeding on frogs, eels and invertebrates.

We have yet to carry out detailed invertebrate surveys at Aberleri, but casual observations over recent years indicate that a range of invertebrates has benefited from the habitat restoration work. Amongst the taller vegetation the short-winged conehead (a bush-cricket) is now thriving and the nationally rare money spider *Maso gallicus* is also present. Dragonflies have proliferated on the flooded ditches and two species tolerant of brackish waters are notable arrivals both here and in Ceredigion. They are black tailed skimmer and migrant hawker. A range of common butterflies such as the small skipper and gatekeeper are now to be seen, together with a couple of day flying moths, the Mother Shipton (which sports a wing pattern resembling a witch's face in profile) and the much scarcer silver hook. This summer a moth trap set in the reedswamp attracted a number of interesting species including the silky wainscot, an uncommon species new to the Dyfi area. Further specialised



Emperor hawk moth Silver hook moth

species may await discovery in the extensive saline lagoons, which have developed in the borrow pits which supplied material for the floodbanks.

A challenge for the future

Among the challenges ahead, we need to expand the re-wetting work to those fields which are still relatively dry and species-poor. We need to make a careful assessment of all the options to ensure money is well spent, and this is made considerably more tricky by the proximity to the tidal Leri channel, with its peat levees and rising sea levels. Professor Andrew Baird, a leading peatland hydrologist based at the University of London, is currently making a detailed study of the land drainage and flood defence infrastructure. This will help to

Aberleri 2004

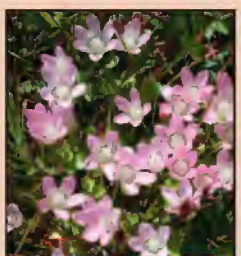
place the management of the Aberleri unit into the wider context of the Dyfi estuary and Cors Fochno.

So there is still much to be done, but there is also much to be excited about. Fifteen years ago Aberleri fields were a poor shadow of their former life as part of an ancient and vast peat bog. Now they team with life, and the natural processes which built the original bog 5,000 years ago are at work again. It is a pleasure for all those involved that we have something very special to show for our work.

__Mike Bailey__ is CCW's Warden at Cors Fochno National Nature Reserve.

Troi'r gorffennol yn ddyfodol ar Gaeau Aberleri

Pan brynwyd Caeau Aberleri gan Gyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru yn 1991, prin y byddai rhywun wedi meddwl bod y tir hwn unwaith yn rhan o ehangder mawr Cors Fochno. Holltwyd yr ardal hon oddi wrth weddill y gors fel rhan o'r cynllun draenio uchelgeisiol ar aber y Ddyfi, nôl yn 1820, ac ers hynny cafodd y tir ei wella ar gyfer amaethyddiaeth.



Bog pimpernel

Rheoli hydroleg y safle oedd yr allwedd pennaf i ail-greu llystyfiant cors. Roedd gofyn cynllunio'n ofalus er mwyn gwarchod buddiannau cymdogion a chadw ambell bwt o gynefin diddorol ar y safle, fel y llystyfiant yn y ffosydd. O ganlyniad i'r gwaith rheolaeth mae d ŵr glaw nawr yn aros yn hirach ar y tir ac mae strwythur y llystyfiant yn fwy amrywiol. Mae migwyn yn tyfu yma eto - arwydd bod y safle unwaith eto yn dechrau dibynnu ar dd ŵr glaw am faetholion, fel sy'n digwydd ar gors. Erbyn hyn mae llu o fywyd gwyllt yn defnyddio'r caeau: bydd amryw o adar gwlypdir yn nythu yma ac mae'n le da i weld adar ysglyfaethus, yn enwedig yn ystod y gaeaf. Mae'r dyfrgi hefyd yn ymwelydd cyson ac mae nifer fawr o greaduriaid di-asgwrn-cefn yn ffynnu yn y llystyfiant cymysg a'r cynefinoedd dyfrol. Mae llawer i'w wneud ac mae sawl her o'n blaenau, ond mae'r dyfodol yn edrych yn llawer mwy cynhyrfus i Gaeau Aberleri.

Materion ymarferol wrth reoli **coedlannau ym Mharc Cenedlaethol Eryri**

Lluniau: Efan Milner

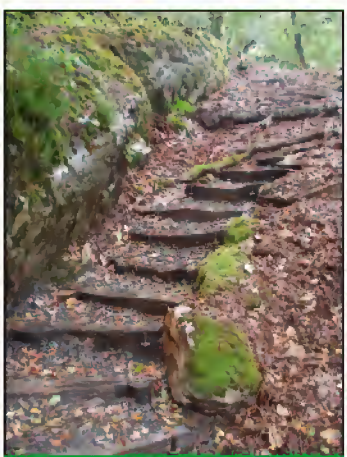
Mae coedwigoedd llydanddail yn un o'r cynefinoedd mwyaf gwerthfawr o fewn Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri ond maen nhw wedi dioddef rhywfaint o ddirywiad yn y gorffennol. Mae Awdurdod y Parc am sicrhau nid yn unig bod arwynebedd y coedwigoedd hyn yn cynyddu ond bod eu cyflwr hefyd yn gwella drwy reolaeth briodol. Er bod cynlluniau amaeth amgylcheddol a chytundebau eraill yn helpu cyflawni hyn, daw cyfle weithiau i'r Awdurdod ddangos ei ymrwymiad i'r nod yma drwy brynu coetir ac ymgymryd â'r gwaith rheolaeth ei hunan. Mae ***EFAN MILNER*** *yn disgrifio enghraifft o hyn yng Nghoed Abergwynant, ar aber y Fawddach*

Mae Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri yn ymestyn dros 820 milltir sgwâr yn siroedd Gwynedd a Chonwy. Mae 2.6% o'r ardal hon yn goedlannau llydanddail brodorol (oddeutu 5800 hectar). Am flynyddoedd lawer gwelwyd yr arwynebedd coediog yma yn lleihau, ond sylweddolwyd, ar yr un pryd, bod iddynt werth uchel o ran bioamrywiaeth. Yn 1993, arwyddwyd cytundeb rhwng Awdurdod y Parc Cenedlaethol a'r Comisiwn Coedwigaeth a oedd yn cydnabod pwysigrwydd yr adnoddau hyn; amlinellwyd mesurau a fyddai'n helpu cynyddu maint y coedlannau brodorol a hefyd yn sicrhau rheolaeth gadwriaethol dros yr esiamplau a fodolai'n barod. Gosodwyd targedau uchelgeisiol i gynyddu maint y coedlannau brodorol a oedd eisoes yn bodoli o fewn y Parc, sef 50% dros 50 mlynedd, a phenderfynwyd y dylid sicrhau rheolaeth dda dros yr holl goedlannau brodorol hyn o fewn yr un cyfnod.

Er nad yw'r Awdurdod yn prynu tir yn gyffredinol, fe wnaiff ystyried gwneud hynny os gellir cyflawni pwrpasau'r Parc yn well trwy gyfrwng y pryniant. I ddangos rhai agweddau ar y polisi hwn fe wnaf ddisgrifio un goedlan a brynwyd gan APC ac amlinellu'r materion rheoli ymarferol y bu'n rhaid i staff yn yr Adain Coedwigoedd a Choedlannau ymdrin â nhw mewn perthynas â'r safle hwnnw.

Mae Abergwynant, ar aber y Fawddach, yn goedlan dderw ucheldir o 36 hectar. Fe'i cliriwyd a'i hailblannu'n rhannol gyda choed conwydd yn y gorffennol. Cafodd y rhain eu rheoli'n wael a methodd nifer ohonynt

Clirio'r conwydd / Clearing the conifers



Gwella mynediad / Improving access

dyfu'n llwyddiannus. O ganlyniad i hynny fe adfywiodd coed bedw (*Betula pubescens*) mewn rhai darnau o'r goedwig. Roedd gan y perchnogion blaenorol ganiatâd cynllunio, a oedd yn parhau i fod yn weithredol, i adeiladu bwthyn ar ochr yr aber i'r goedlan. Y brif broblem arall oedd y ffaith bod 90% o'r goedlan wedi ei gorchuddio â *Rhododendron ponticum* gan leihau gwerth bioamrywiaeth y goedlan yn sylweddol iawn.

Nôl yn 1996, gofynnwyd i Gronfa Treftadaeth y Loteri am nawdd ariannol i brynu'r goedlan. Y weithred gyntaf yr oedd angen ei chyflawni oedd diddymu'r cais cynllunio ac asesu'r goedlan er mwyn sefydlu beth oedd y blaenoriaethau o safbwynt rheoli. Ar ôl cwblhau'r camau cyntaf hyn fe ddaeth yn amlwg bod angen cymorth ariannol pellach. Cyflwynwyd cais i'r Comisiwn Coedwigaeth am gymorth grant o dan y Cynllun Grant Coedlannau (CGC). Trwy fynd am y grantiau penodol ar gyfer coedlannau a oedd eisoes mewn bodolaeth, ac a sefydlwyd ar ôl dyddiad y Cytundeb rhwng y ddau gorff, llwyddodd yr Awdurdod ddenu £56,000 pellach tuag at gyflawni gwaith ymarferol o fewn y goedlan.

Ar y cychwyn, canolbwyntiwyd yn gyfan gwbl ar y gwaith o glirio'r Rhododendron. Rhannwyd y goedlan yn 7 o adrannau er mwyn cyflawni hyn. Cwblhawyd y cytundebau ar sail tendrau ac fe benodwyd contractwr newydd ar gyfer pob cytundeb newydd. Mae clirio rhododendron yn broses lafurus ac mae angen monitro contractwyr yn rheolaidd, yn bennaf er mwyn eu hysgogi i barhau gyda'r gwaith. Ymhob achos roedd y cytundeb yn cynnwys torri llwyni ac un ai llosgi neu stacio'r bonion a dorrwyd. Yn ddieithriad fe fethwyd ag amcangyfrif yn gywir yr amser ar gyfer y gwaith ac mewn nifer o achosion bu'n rhaid ail-negodi cytundebau. Un o'r anawsterau mwyaf oedd y ffaith bod yr ardaloedd wedi cael eu mesur ar fapiau digidol - nad oedd yn rhoi ystyriaeth i lethr y safle.

Nid y materion rheoli coedwig hyn oedd fy unig broblemau. Y broblem gyntaf oedd y gŵyn bod y llifiau cadwyn yn cael eu cychwyn yn rhy fuan yn y bore ac yn tarfu ar ymwelwyr yn y lletyau gwyliau. Roedd yr ail gŵyn ynglŷn â'r mwg a oedd yn chwythu i lawr ac i mewn i dai ac yn aros yno drwy'r dydd. Roedd rhaid i ni gymryd y gŵyn hon o ddifrif oherwydd fe allai'r mwg fod yn wenwynig ac roedd yna blant ifanc yn y tŷ. Bu rhaid stopio cynnau tanau, a stacio'r bonion yn lle hynny. Gall twmpathau o goed sy'n pydru fod yn werthfawr o ran cadwraeth, ond roedd yn rhaid gofalu nad oedd y staciau yn gorchuddio bonion wedi'u torri oherwydd bod angen eu chwistrellu'r flwyddyn ganlynol.

Yn ystod y gwaith roedd yn rhaid ystyried materion lechyd a Diogelwch, yn enwedig gan fod ochr aber y goedlan yn ymestyn dros 1.5 cilomedr i lawr ar hyd Llwybr y Fawddach; mae hwn yn rhan o'r rhodfa Feicio

Abergwynant o Farchynys / Abergwynant from Farchynys

Genedlaethol ac fe'i ddefnyddir yn aml yn ystod y flwyddyn. Mae llwybr cyhoeddus yn rhedeg trwy'r goedlan hefyd ac fe'i cadwyd yn agored trwy gydol y gwaith. O'r diwedd, yn 2002, fe gwblhawyd y gwaith o glirio'r Rhododendron, ond doedd y gwaith ddim ar ben eto! Gosodwyd cytundeb gwahanol i reoli'r aildyfiant blynyddol ac fe ddefnyddiwyd yr un contractwr am yn ail flwyddyn dros y 7 mlynedd ddiwethaf. Y prif reswm am wneud hyn yw bod y contractwr yn adnabod y goedlan yn dda iawn erbyn hyn ac yn gwybod lle mae'r aildyfiant yn debygol o ddigwydd a lle mae angen cyflawni mesurau rheoli mwy llym.

Y gwaith nesaf i ganolbwyntio arno oedd symud y coed conwydd. Roedd y goedlan wedi cael ei rhannu'n dair rhan er mwyn cynorthwyo gyda'r gwaith o'i rheoli a defnyddiwyd system newydd o gytundebau ar gyfer y dasg hon. Taclwyd y ddwy ran gyntaf o dan un cytundeb rheoli a sefydlwyd gennym gyda chwmni coedwigaeth. Gyda'r cytundeb hwn, y cwmni fu'n rheoli'r contractwyr a gwerthiant y coed ac fe ddefnyddiwyd yr arian o'r gwerthiant i dalu'r contractwr. Ein cyfrifoldeb ninnau oedd cwrdd ag unrhyw ddiffyg ariannol a oedd dros ben. Gweithredwyd yr ail gytundeb mewn ffordd debyg gyda'r un cwmni unwaith eto. Y fantais gyda'r dull hwn o weithio yw nad oes cymaint o angen rheolwyr i fonitro contractwyr, ac mae hynny'n gweithio i raddau.

Y broblem yw bod contractwyr dymchwel coed yn gweithio gyda chyllideb dynn iawn sy'n seiliedig ar faint o goed sy'n cael eu dymchwel a'u cludo oddi ar y safle, tra fo'r rheolwyr cytundeb yn gweithio ar ddyfynbris penodedig. Yn achos Abergwynant canlyniad hyn oedd bod y contractwyr dymchwel yn ceisio cyrraedd coed a oedd wedi'u clustnodi i gael eu torri a'u gadael yn y goedwig oherwydd bod y mynediad yn wael. Cafodd rhai coed brodorol eu niweidio'n ddianghenraid ar y safle ac fe grëwyd rhai ardaloedd sylweddol o falurion/naddion coed. Cytunwyd i adael rhai o'r coed a niweidiwyd fel ag yr oeddynt oherwydd bod modd iddynt fod yn gynefinoedd amrywiol. Roedd rhaid symud y malurion coed a'u taenu oherwydd fe fyddai'n amhosib plannu trwyddynt.

Cwblhawyd y cytundeb ym mis Mawrth eleni ac rydym yn bwriadu plannu'r mannau agored mawr gyda derw mes digoes (*Quercus petrea*), o Darddiad Lleol, (mae'r dywediad 'o Darddiad Lleol' yn golygu bod hadau yn cael eu tyfu o goed o ardaloedd lleol ac mae'r DU wedi cael ei rhannu'n 23 gwahanol barth Tarddiad Lleol). Mae Cymru wedi cael ei rhannu yn ddau barth Tarddiad Lleol ac mae'r Parc Cenedlaethol yn cynnwys y ddau ohonynt gan fod y parthau'n rhannu Dwyrain a Gorllewin Cymru. Nid yw'n hawdd cael gafael ar goed o darddiad lleol oherwydd mai dim ond ychydig o feithrinfeydd coedwigoedd mawr a all fforddio tyfu detholiad cynhwysfawr, gan fod cynifer o barthau. Mae llawer o feithrinfeydd llai yn cyflenwi'r coed hyn ond bach yw'r nifer sydd ganddynt mewn stoc fel rheol ac mae'n amlwg bod hyn yn amrywio o flwyddyn i flwyddyn yn ddibynnol ar argaeledd. Mae'n debygol (a gobeithir) y bydd y gystadleuaeth am goed o darddiad lleol yn cynyddu pan fydd y Comisiwn yn cynnig cymhelliad i'w plannu o dan eu strwythur grant newydd.

Er mwyn sicrhau bod gennym goed o darddiad lleol ar gyfer Abergwynant fe wnaethom ddefnyddio gwirfoddolwyr i gasglu mes sydd bellach yn cael eu

Trwy glirio pyllau dŵr gellir gwella bioamrywiaeth / Pond clearance improves biodiversity

tyfu dan gytundeb mewn meithrinfa fach ar Ynys Môn (Coed Mona). Gobeithir y bydd y coed hyn yn barod i'w plannu yn y gwanwyn gan ein gweithwyr ystâd ni ein hunain.

Y darn olaf o waith angenrheidiol yn Abergwynant oedd darparu mynediad addas ar gyfer y cyhoedd. Mae'r Awdurdod yn hyrwyddo mynediad cyhoeddus i'w holl goedlannau a dydy Abergwynant ddim yn eithriad i'r arferiad hwn. Yn ystod y 6 mis diwethaf fe grëwyd dau lwybr newydd a chysylltu'r rhain gyda llwybrau a fodolai yn barod o fewn y goedlan, er mwyn creu rhodfa gylchol. Mae yna chwarel fawr yng nghanol y coed ac am resymau diogelwch roedd yn rhaid i'r llwybrau fod yn ddigon pell oddi wrth y chwarel er mwyn lleihau'r perygl i'r cyhoedd. Crëwyd y llwybrau trwy ddefnyddio cerrig mâl o chwarel leol sydd ddim ond ddeng munud o'r safle ac fe ddefnyddiwyd hefyd rhywfaint o bren derw o'r coed a gwympwyd gan y gwynt o fewn y goedlan. Cafodd y llwybrau eu defnyddio'n aml yn ystod yr haf ac fe dynnwyd sylw atynt yng nghylchgrawn ymwelwyr y Parc Cenedlaethol.

Mae amrywiol broblemau yn gysylltiedig ag annog mynediad ar gyfer y cyhoedd, megis ystyriaethau fel cynnal a chadw'r llwybrau, ond efallai mai'r peth sy'n cymryd yr amser mwyaf yw monitro coed sydd gerllaw'r llwybrau. Cyflawnir archwiliadau blynyddol ymhob coedlan ac yn ystod yr archwiliadau hyn asesir pa mor iach yw'r coed a nodir pa waith sydd angen ei gyflawni - fel symud pren neu goed marw oddi ar y llwybrau. Mae angen rhywfaint o gyfaddawdu yn hynny o beth oherwydd fe all coed sy'n beryglus fod yn rhai gwerthfawr o ran bioamrywiaeth. Mae'n rhaid cyflawni archwiliadau ar ôl stormydd hegar hefyd ac, os bydd angen, caiff coedlannau eu cau dros dro er mwyn cyflawni gwaith adfer.

*Mae **Efan Milner** yn Gynorthwydd Coedlannau a Thrin Coed gydag Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Eryri.*

Woodland restoration challenge in Snowdonia

Since the early 1990s the Snowdonia National Park Authority has been active in encouraging a reversal in the decline in quality and extent of broadleaved woodland within the Park boundaries. Occasionally, as in the case of Abergwynant woods, the Authority has been prepared to purchase areas of woodland in order to pursue this aim. The article describes some of the very practical challenges faced by Park Authority staff in addressing the conservation management issues at this site. These challenges have included fundraising, managing complex contracts, dealing with safety issues and site-related complaints, sourcing local provenance trees and ensuring long term monitoring.

Bearded tits one, bitterns nil

Bearded tits have bred for the first time in Wales, giving one reserve a remarkable first. The delightful twist to this success, as ***TONY PICKUP*** *reports, is that they have colonised the wrong kind of reedbed, one specifically designed for bitterns; nature having a laugh?*

Male bearded tit

Thanks to Chris Wormell Photography
www.homepages.mcb.net/wormell

This summer, on hearing that bearded tits *Panurus biarmicus* had bred on the Newport Wetlands reserve, the editor asked if I could write a short piece on their arrival. His thoughts were that, since we had obviously got the conditions right for them, would I say how we managed to get the first pair of breeding bearded tits in Wales for 25 years.

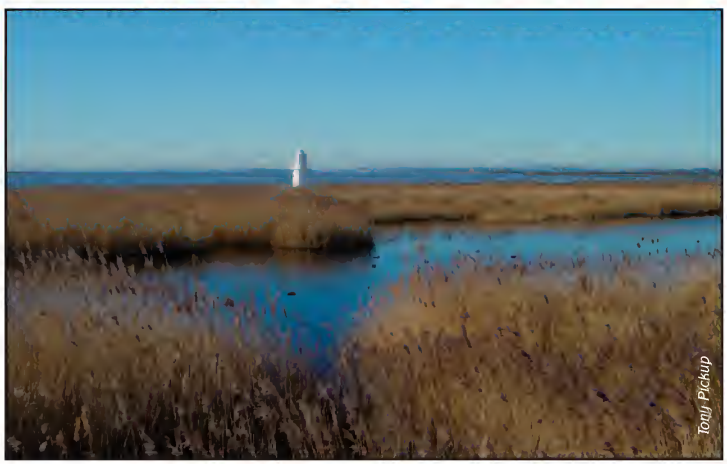
I would love to be able to say that it was all planned and that they have simply done exactly what we expected. But honesty decrees that we can take little credit for their arrival. Certainly we created a 40-hectare (100 acre) reedbed, which is obviously a start, but the reedbed was designed for bitterns, not bearded tits. Bitterns need 'wet' reedbeds, with lots of water under the reed in which they can find food. Bearded tits, on the other hand, are supposed to prefer 'dry' reedbeds with a deep, dry leaf litter below the reeds.

Our reedbeds are for bitterns. They have shallow shelves with about 30cm of water on which the reed grows. Bitterns skulk through the reedy shallows, preying on unwary frogs and fish as they go. An occasional strip of deep water, where reed won't grow, means that there are always lengths of water and reed 'edge', the bittern's favoured hunting haunt. To increase this 'edge' we cut areas of reed in winter to create open pools. We keep the reed shelves flooded all year round to ensure the bitterns always have easy access to their food. We even have 'ladders' on the sluices up which elvers can climb into the reedbeds where they will mature into bittern food! In fact we have all that bitterns need – except bitterns! Perhaps not quite true, as up to three bitterns have been on the reserve, for each of the past four winters. But apart from an odd, half-hearted boom in spring 2003, there has been no sign of their breeding.

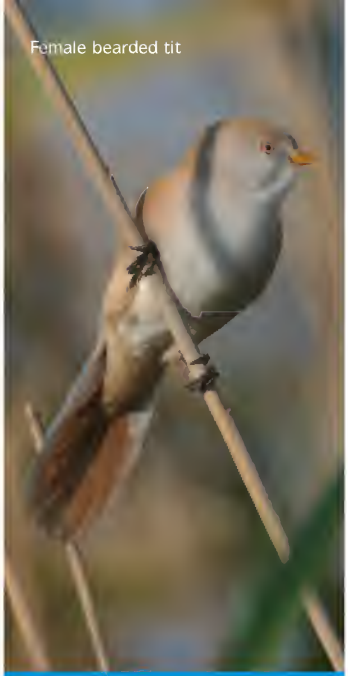
Then, out of the blue in winter 2004, bearded tits started to be seen; only one or two and always very fleetingly. Such winter occurrences are not that unusual, though it was the first time for the Wetlands. Bearded tits occasionally 'erupt' from their breeding grounds and disperse quite widely. A few small passerine species do this; a natural way of discouraging over-crowding and of encouraging the establishment of new sites. Despite the fact that there were odd sightings into March, it entered no one's head that they might stay to breed. When there was a sighting of a pair in spring, possibly carrying nesting material, no one really considered it more than a pre-breeding season display, to be followed by their imminent departure. A complete absence of records for many weeks afterwards seemed to confirm this suggestion. Then suddenly, in June, a report came in that someone had seen a family party of 'beardies'. After that keen birders spent hours trying to add a Welsh beardie to their list. Eventually suspicions were aroused that there might have been two family parties, and though this was never absolutely confirmed, judging by the numbers seen and distribution of the sightings it seems likely.

So, despite our detailed plans we have so far failed to attract the species for which we designed the reedbeds and we have attracted the species that no one really considered. Actually I must admit that we did one teeny bit of management for beardies. Kevin, the Reserve Manager, decided to put a reed 'wigwam' into one of the reedbeds in 2003. Wigwams are nest boxes designed for bearded tits. He stuck it on a broom stick in Reedbed 9, very much more in hope than expectation. Where did the bearded tits breed? Reedbed 9. Did they use Kevin's wigwam?...We don't know, he can't find it again!

Tony Pickup *has been a warden for over thirty years. He is currently on secondment from RSPB to CCW as Senior Site Manager of the Newport Wetlands Reserve.*



Tony Pickup



Female bearded tit

Chris Wormell

Ymwelydd annisgwyl yng Nghasnewydd

Denu aderyn y bwn oedd y nod wrth greu gwely cyrs 40 hectar ar Warchodfa Gwlypdir Casnewydd. Feddyliodd neb y byddai'r titwod barfog, a ymddangosodd ar y warchodfa am y tro cyntaf yn ystod gaeaf 2004, yn gweld potensial nythu yn y cynefin. Gwely cyrs sych, gyda digonedd o ddeiliach ar y ddaear sydd orau gan y titw barfog, tra bod y gwely cyrs hwn wedi ei gynllunio'n benodol fel y gall aderyn y bwn stelcian mewn d ŵr bas rhwng y coesynnau cyrs. Tybed a ddefnyddiodd y titwod y blwch 'wigwam' a osodwyd yn obeithiol ar eu cyfer yng nghanol y cyrs? Does neb yn si ŵr- mae'r blwch wedi diflannu, ond fe wyddom i sicrwydd bod un, os nad dau deulu bach o ditwod barfog wedi nythu'n llwyddiannus ar wlypdir Casnewydd eleni.

Rory Francis

Saving Wentwood

How the people of Newport helped save Wales' largest ancient forest

In May 2005 large 'For Sale' signs appeared at Wentwood Forest. Here ***RORY FRANCIS*** *and* ***JON WINDER*** *explain what happened next, and how the Woodland Trust (Coed Cadw) came to buy a substantial piece of Wales' largest ancient woodland.*

The first reaction from many people was amazement. The Woodland Trust (Coed Cadw), a charity associated by many people with small pieces of deciduous woodland, had launched a high profile campaign to purchase 352 ha (870 acres) of predominantly coniferised woodland, one of Wales' prime coniferous plantations in terms of softwood production. Nor is it covered by any wildlife site designation nor noted for rare species. The funding target of £1.5 million seemed to many to be unachievable. So why was the Woodland Trust so keen on Wentwood? What did it hope to achieve?

As the Trust's campaign swung into motion, the answers started to come out. Wentwood may have been planted with conifers, some of it as long ago as the late 19th century and much more of it following WWII, but it remains Wales' largest ancient woodland. Beneath the coniferous canopy stand relics of an ancient woodland flora. Throughout the wood, a network of sunken lanes, ancient tree-lined boundary banks and charcoal hearths bear testimony to centuries of woodland use.

All this was under a continuing threat. The plantation conifers were being managed under a clearfell and replant regime. This involves felling large areas of trees at one time, putting at risk the remaining ground flora, surviving native trees and deadwood, and damaging the soil; followed by replanting with more conifers, risking further damage through herbicide use and heavy shading. Plants which are woodland specialists, like wood anemone, dog's mercury and bluebells, can be

wiped out if exposed to sudden and overwhelming changes in conditions.

WTPL John Sorrell
An aerial view of Wentwood

The very name Wentwood, or Coed Gwent in Welsh, seems to underline how important the forest is in the local area. First mentioned nearly a millennium ago, in medieval texts such as the Book of Llandaff, Coed Gwent literally means the wood of Gwent, suggesting it once covered a substantial part of Gwent, an area which existed long before the 1974 reorganisation of Welsh local government! As it says on the information board in the Foresters Oaks car park: "The Forest of Wentwood is but a shadow of its former self; 2000 years ago it formed virtually an unbroken band of dense woodland, stretching from the River Usk to the banks of the Wye. Then it consisted of mainly oak and beech trees."

History has not treated Wentwood kindly. In 1952 H. J. Massingham reported that "the last of Wentwood was felled in the war of 1939-45... all has now been so savagely cut that hardly a tree is to be seen except the conifers of the Forestry Commission, themselves soon to be clear-felled. Elsewhere I saw the voids where trees once stood, filled in with a litter of bramble, willow herb and tussocky whitegrass... the whole area is a dismal derelict waste, an upland hell and the bleakest of monuments to man's suicidal folly and cupidity... the acts of seventeenth century and contemporary man have transformed Wentwood from beauty and use to barrenness".

Wentwood is Wales' largest ancient woodland. But the 352 hectares the Woodland Trust is now purchasing is less than half of Wentwood Forest. Most of the rest belongs to the National Assembly, and is managed by the Forestry Commission Wales (FCW). The acquisition therefore offered the possibility not just of restoring 352 hectares, but also of working with FCW to improve the management of the whole forest and create a ripple out effect which will influence attitudes and actions over the wider landscape.

But in the spring of 2005 the initial outlook did not look too hopeful. The vendors of the site, two separate trusts with ownerships of 180 ha and 172 ha respectively, wanted a quick sale, and were not willing to allow the Trust an extended window for fundraising. Other buyers were seriously interested and there would be competitive bidding, so any fundraising campaign would be against the clock. There was no guarantee we would be able to raise the money, and no guarantee we would be able to acquire the woodland even if we did.

However, the Woodland Trust decided at the highest level to give it our best shot. Staff and Trustees were determined that the Trust should not just protect designated wildlife habitats or the woodlands that nobody else wants, but actually make a lasting difference by restoring part of Wales' largest ancient woodland to a predominantly native canopy. Our aim was to allow an entire ecosystem not just to re-establish itself, but to adapt, as all ecosystems will have to in the future, in the light of climate change.

As many in the timber industry saw things, Wentwood was a prime conifer plantation, fertile, naturally well drained, well supplied with forest tracks and close to the motorway network and the timber processing industry. One of the Trust's key aims in its campaign

was to change attitudes towards ancient woodland planted with conifers, to try to get people to see these sites as something more than conifer plantations. We believe that it is vital that the conifers are progressively thinned, letting in more light to revive the ground flora, and that, above all, no more conifers should be planted. Fortunately for the campaign, the people of Newport, which is just three miles to the south-east, needed very little persuasion.

Walking through Wentwood a few weeks before our campaign was launched, wearing a Woodland Trust fleece, one of us was approached by Tim Gwynder-Lewis, who walks his dog Chloe in Wentwood every day. His greeting contained the memorable words: "Oh, you're from the Woodland Trust. I do hope you're going to buy this!" That simple comment, relayed as it inevitably was from colleague to colleague, set the tone for the rest of the public campaign.

Even before our campaign had gone public, Gerry Keighley, the Editor of the *South Wales Argus*, had agreed to be part of a partnership with the Trust. In the event, the *Argus* often covered the story twice a week, including a reply coupon for readers to return their pledges of financial support.

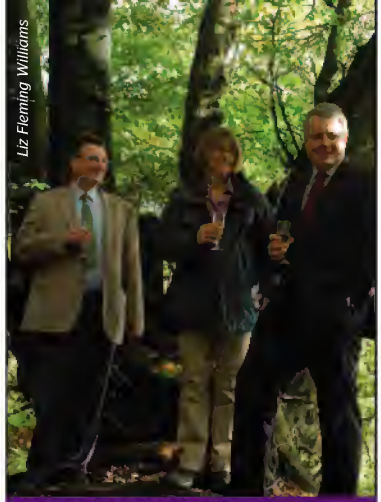
A target of £100,000 was set for the public appeal (as opposed to funds raised from our existing members and from trusts and public bodies). While this is a fairly small part of the total amount, it represents a huge sum for the local community, and evidence of local support like this can be crucial in unlocking even larger sums from public funding sources and charitable trusts. By September, just three months after the launch, we had exceeded this target. At least a third of the pledge forms returned had been cut out of the Argus, rather than out of our own leaflets, illustrating that a local paper can still make a real difference within its local area.

As one would expect, the launch day, 7th June, was hectic. Following a press launch in Wentwood during the day, the Caerwent Community Hall was full to capacity for the public meeting during that gorgeous summer evening, and there was a real buzz amongst the audience. The wider media, television and radio, had rightly identified a big story, and gave the campaign good coverage throughout.

Keen to build support among key opinion formers, the Woodland Trust invited local AMs and MPs to visit the site and support the campaign. Amazingly, almost every one did so, many providing powerful, personal quotes which the papers were able to make use of. Many thanks to David Davies, Jocelyn Davies, Paul Flynn, Mike German, William Graham, John Griffiths, Laura Ann Jones and Jessica Morden.

Meanwhile, the Trust's press office secured enthusiastic support from a dazzling array of celebrities, including Dame Judi Dench, Chris Beardshaw and Tony Robinson, while the author and woodland expert Oliver Rackham spent three days in the area, walking the wood and doing research for the Trust in the local Record Office. Amongst the mine of information he uncovered were the quotation from H. J. Massingham given above, and some sales particulars from 1902. These describe Wentwood as "The largest wood in England [sic], being a remnant of the primeval forest of the Gwent tribe". They go on to make clear that the wood contains: "Many unrivalled sites for residences in a situation of original and enchanting beauty, the like of which cannot be artificially designed". As impressive as that may sound, the Woodland Trust has absolutely no plans to establish "residences" within Wentwood!

As far as the fundraising was concerned, the Trust's appeal to its own members was crucial, and the Trust is also extremely grateful to the Tubney Charitable Trust, which has agreed to make a substantial contribution towards the campaign.


Liz Fleming Williams

Carwyn Jones (right|) has good news for Wentwood

In July 2005 the Trust submitted a formal offer for the 352 ha of Wentwood. Following some tough negotiation, the vendors agreed to sell to the Trust in late July. It is hoped that the sale will have been completed by the end of the year.

Small oaks from little acorns...

So what does the future hold for Wentwood Forest? Clearly the Trust has a huge amount of work to do. In the months following the acquisition, we will be commissioning all kinds of baseline surveys of the site as it is today, its wildlife interest, its silviculture and its archaeology. We shall have to engage with all kinds of users' groups, from dog-walkers to naturalists, horse-riders to cyclists, attempting to find solutions that protect the forest and people's enjoyment of it.

One conclusion that we have already reached is that in the recent past professional conservationists have failed to pay Wentwood proper attention. Bearing in mind the forest's startling biodiversity, it is surprising how little recording has been done of its wildlife. We aim to put that right.

What is clear is that Wentwood's potential is huge. By experimenting and being open about the techniques and costs involved, we hope to make Wentwood a demonstration project, a showcase of how ancient woodland can be restored and its precious wildlife revived, practically and affordably and in a way compatible with continuing timber production. This should be extremely useful to the owners of the other 27,000 ha of ancient woodland in Wales which have been planted with conifers or other non-native trees.

Restoration is a process, and one which needs to take place gradually over many decades. How we go about it is informed by what we know of the history of the forest and of the wildlife that survives or may colonise. We cannot determine the precise outcomes, nor should we try to. We can be confident that if we enable ecological processes to operate on a sufficient scale we will get good and varied habitat and a forest ecosystem that stands some chance of surviving the rigours of climate change.

We were delighted in October this year when Carwyn Jones, the Assembly Government's Environment, Planning and Transport Minister, visited Wentwood to announce a grant of £50,000 from the Countryside Council for Wales towards the Trust's acquisition of the site. We were particularly pleased that he expressed the hope that the Trust and the Forestry Commission will be able to agree a joint strategy regarding the restoration of the Forest and its use for outdoor learning and public access. Potentially, FCW and the Woodland Trust can achieve far more together than either can achieve on their own. We very much look forward to working with our colleagues in FCW in the future. They have already published their long-term plan for their part of the Forest and they propose to convert significant areas to native woodland over the next 50 years, although we do have some concerns that their plan still includes some clearfelling and replanting with conifers.

Woodland Trust
tree for all
coed i bawb
Coed Cadw

One particular subject which is a priority for the Woodland Trust is getting children involved in experiencing woodland and planting trees. Fearing that the younger generation are being deprived of contact with the natural world around them, we have taken up the challenge by launching the Tree For All campaign. The aim is to inspire the children and give them the memorable experience of having planted trees. We aim to plant a tree for every child under 16 in the UK, and to involve at least one million children in planting these trees themselves.

The opportunities for involving children in restoring

Wentwood are immense. We will replace those chunks of the wood which have been clearfelled and replanted with conifers with native Welsh trees like oak, ash and beech. From a pure nature conservation perspective we would let natural regeneration take its course and produce birch-dominated woodland, but we think it is more important that we take the opportunity to involve children, and planting additional trees grown from collected seed is still one of the very best ways of doing that. What's more, the forest is easily accessible, with ample tracks, and there are 156 primary and 37 secondary schools within 13 miles of the site.

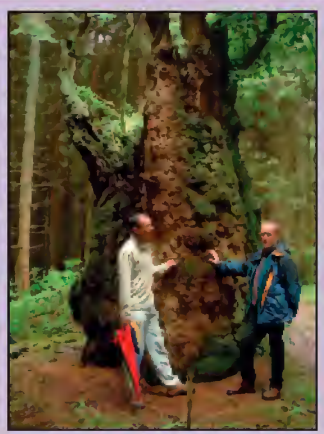
Hence, the Woodland Trust will be approaching local primary schools next year and offering to arrange visits to Wentwood. It's an opportunity that the Trust has already offered to many schools around the UK. We have found that the children have really enjoyed getting muddy planting their trees, but also that they've been inspired by the thought that they have helped to make a lasting difference in terms of enhancing our woodland heritage. What's more, this won't be a flash in the pan. Wentwood is so big, and there is so much restoration work to do, that there will be opportunities for children to get involved for years to come.

The campaign Save Wentwood Forest has been a huge challenge for the Woodland Trust in Wales, but the response from the public has been firm and unequivocal. Hopefully this public enthusiasm will herald positive changes in the future, not just in Wentwood itself, but much more widely across the countryside, as people begin to see our coniferised ancient woodlands as the natural treasures they are.

__Rory Francis__ is Coed Cadw Woodland Trust's public affairs and publicity officer. __Jon Winder__ is the woodland officer who will be responsible for managing Wentwood on behalf of the Trust.

Llwyddiant a her i goed Cadw yng Ngwent

Beth oedd cymhelliad Coed Cadw eleni wrth geisio codi £1.5 miliwn i brynu un o blanhigfeydd conwydd mwyaf Cymru, ger Casnewydd? Roedd yr ateb yn llechu o dan gysgod trwm y coed. Yma, roedd llwybrau coll, hen gloddiau terfyn, aelwydydd golosg a llu o flodau gwyllt fel clychau'r gog a bresych y cŵn yn dangos mai coetir hynafol oedd hwn.



Mae'r sôn cyntaf am Goed Gwent yn Llyfr Llandâf. Arferai'r goedwig dderi a ffawydd hon ymestyn yn ddi-dor rhwng yr Afon Wysg a'r Afon Gwy. Plannwyd y conwydd yn y 19^{fed}G ac ar ôl yr 2il Ryfel Byd ac er iddynt drawsnewid Coed Gwent, hon, o hyd, yw'r goedwig hynafol fwyaf yng Nghymru.

Deufis yn unig oedd gan Goed Cadw i godi'r arian. Llwyddodd wneud hynny oherwydd cefnogaeth leol gref, yn enwedig gan bobl Casnewydd, a gododd dros £100,000. Hanner Coed Gwent (352ha) a brynwyd gan Goed Cadw – mae'r gweddill yn dal i fod dan reolaeth y Comisiwn Coedwigaeth.

Mae'r pryniant yn creu cyfle gwych i ddangos sut gellir adfer coedwig hynafol mewn ffordd sy'n ymarferol a fforddiadwy ac sy'n gydnaws â chynhyrchu pren. Bydd hyn, gobeithio, o ddefnydd i berchnogion y 27,000 ha arall o goetir hynafol Cymreig a blannwyd gyda chonwydd. Bydd cyfle hefyd i weithio gyda'r Comisiwn Coedwigaeth er mwyn dylanwadu ar reolaeth y goedwig yn ei chyfanrwydd.

Fe gymer ddegawdau i gyflawni hyn ac i wneud hynny mewn ffordd sy'n cwrdd ag anghenion nifer o ddefnyddwyr gwahanol. Amhosib yw darogan yr union ganlyniadau wrth ail greu prosesau ecolegol ar raddfa fawr, ond gwyddwn i sicrwydd y bydd yma gyfleoedd ardderchog i gynnwys plant yn y gwaith cynhyrfus hwn am flynyddoedd maith i ddod.

Gwylio môr wenoliaid **Ynys Llanddwyn**

RSPB

Mae hanes cadwraeth yng Nghymru yn ddarlun o hanes pobl yn ogystal â hanes bywyd gwyllt, ac mae'r straeon amdanyn nhw yn aml yn hynod ac yn adlewyrchu agweddau diddorol ar ein cymdeithas. Yma mae RICHARD FARMER yn disgrifio ychydig o hanes un o'r safleoedd Cymreig - y bobl a'r adar - a fu unwaith yn amlwg yn hanes yr RSPB.

"Oherwydd dyfnder y dwfr sydd o gylch Ynys yr Adar, annoeth ceisio glanio ynddi ond ar dywydd tawel iawn. Man epilio y for-wennol gyffredin yn unig yw'r ynys hon, clywir ei ysgrech wichlyd yn ddibaid, dydd a nos, yn ystod ei archosiad yma o'r gwanwyn i'r hydref. Gorchuddir yr ynys bron yn llwyr, yn nechrau'r haf, gan wyau yr aderyn hwn, y mwyafrif ohonynt mewn agenau yn llawn o rô, pob aderyn yn gyfrifol am ddau, weithiau dri, o'r wyau, ac amrywia'r lliwiau o wyrdd goleu i lwyd tywyll." [1]

Catherine Roberts, 1901

Ar ddechrau'r 20fed Ganrif roedd Ynys Llanddwyn yn un o'r mannau mwyaf arwyddocaol yng Nghymru ar gyfer adar. Roedd yn ddyddiau cynnar iawn yn hanes yr RSPB bryd hynny – dim ond dau neu dri o aelodau staff cyflogedig oedd gan y Gymdeithas ac felly sefydlwyd rhwydwaith o 'Wylwyr' ganddi, fel ffordd ymarferol o warchod adar. Derbyniai'r Gwylwyr hyn rhywfaint o dâl am ddiogelu adar prin, rhag casglwyr wyau yn fwy na dim arall.

Yn 1902, penodwyd Gwylwyr ar nifer o safleoedd ar hyd a lled y DU ac erbyn 1906, ar gais perchennog Ynys Llanddwyn, roedd y pedwar peilot llongau a drigai ar yr Ynys yn rhan o'r rhwydwaith yma. Roeddent yn derbyn tâl am 'warchod yr holl adar ac wyau' ac am 'beidio gadael unrhyw un i lanio ar ynys yr adar oni bai fod ganddo ganiatâd ysgrifenedig oddi wrth y perchennog, y gwir anrhydeddus F.G. Wynn, neu oddi wrth y Gymdeithas'. Yn 1912, roedd y pedwar peilot yma yn cynrychioli canran arwyddocaol o'r criw Gwylwyr (22 i gyd) ar draws y DU - sydd ynddo'i hun

Môr-wennol bigddu / Sandwich tern

Michael Hammett

Wil Sandison

Ynys Llanddwyn, oddi ar arfordir Ynys Môn
Llanddwyn Island off Anglesey

yn adlewyrchu pwysigrwydd y boblogaeth adar ar Ynys Llanddwyn ar y pryd.

Roedd lladron wyau yn ymweld yn gyson â'r ynys. Hyd yn oed pan oedd y Gwylwyr yn cael eu talu i warchod yr wyau fe lwyddodd y casglwr wyau enwog, y Parchedig Francis Jourdain, i lanio ar yr ynys yn 1909. Yn ei ddyddiadur mae'n disgrifio'r daith draw, ac yn sôn, wrth iddo nesáu at y graig ddu a alwai yn 'Ynys y Môr-wenoliaid', fel y gwelodd haid o ryw 300-400 o fôr-wenoliaid yn codi o'i flaen, yn gymysgedd o rhai cyffredin a rhai gwridog. Synnai bod yno gynifer o fôr-wenoliaid gwridog, gan mai dim ond 15-20 pâr yr oedd wedi disgwyl eu gweld. [2] Ond roedd llai yno erbyn diwedd ei ymweliad - fe lwyddodd ddwyn chwe wy allan o dri nyth y tro hwnnw.

Pan fu farw'r Prif Beilot, William Jones, yn 1918, cymerodd ei wraig, Mrs Elizabeth Jones, ei le fel Gwyliwr. Bu'n Wyliwr swyddogol am flynyddoedd lawer a chymerai ei chyfrifoldebau o ddifrif, yn ôl pob sôn.

Aelodau o Gyngor yr RSPB fyddai'n gyfrifol am archwilio gwaith y Gwylwyr a gwnaent hyn yn aml ar eu cost eu hunain. Paratowyd adroddiadau am y gwaith ar gyfer eu dosbarthu'n gyfrinachol i Bwyllgor Gwylwyr yr RSPB. Anaml iawn y byddai'r rhain yn cynnwys manylion am yr adar prin ar y safleoedd, rhag i'r wybodaeth ddod i ddwylo'r lladron wyau, mae'n debyg. Ond mae adroddiadau o 1921 ynglŷn â gwaith Mrs Jones yn cofnodi ei bod hi a'i chynorthwywyr ffyddlon wedi llwyddo atal o leiaf un ymgais i ddwyn wyau adar ar Ynys Llanddwyn: "If these birds are to be saved, it will be necessary next season to extend the Watching to the rocks, to which the terns have betaken themselves, and which are at the mercy of marauding visitors from Manchester. Such an arrangement can be made if more money can be contributed to the already quite inadequate Watcher's Fund." [3]

Daeth cyfle i'r RSPB gymryd prydles dros fferm Llanddwyn yn 1936. O lythyron y Parch. L.Balythwaite a fu'n ymweld â Llanddwyn sawl gwaith ar ran yr RSPB yn ystod y 1920au a'r 1930au, gwyddom fod oddeutu 100 pâr o fôr-wenoliaid gwridog wedi bod yn bresennol ar Ynys yr Adar, a 400 pâr ar Ynys y Clochydd, yn 1920. Bwriad yr RSPB, wrth gymryd y brydles, oedd gwarchod yr adar rhag cael eu haflonyddu gan bobl a da byw. Mrs Jones oedd y Gwyliwr o hyd; gellid dweud, felly, mai'r wraig hon oedd y warden cyntaf ar warchodfa natur gyntaf yr RSPB yng Nghymru.

Ond roedd Mrs Jones, yr RSPB a'r môr-wenoliaid yn wynebu brwydr fawr yn erbyn nifer o ffactorau. O ganlyniad i'r cynnydd yn nifer y gwylanod a'r mulfranod, a'r aflonyddu di-baid, roedd y mwyafrif o'r môr-wenoliaid wedi diflannu o'r ynysoedd bychain o gwmpas Ynys Llanddwyn erbyn yr ail ryfel byd. Roedd adroddiadau Mrs Jones yn cyfeirio'n gyson at yr aflonyddu ac at yr anhawster o gadw pobl draw. Cyrhaeddodd y sefyllfa rhyw benllanw yn 1938 pan ypsetiwyd trigolion Niwbwrch gan ymdrechion Mrs Jones a'i theulu i gadw rheolaeth a threfn ar bobl pan fydden nhw'n ymweld â'r Ynys. Yn dilyn ymgais gan fab Mrs Jones i sicrhau bod y postmon yn cadw at y llwybr cyhoeddus ar Ynys Llanddwyn, trefnwyd 'picnic torfol' gan y pentrefwyr. Eu bwriad oedd cynnal protest gyhoeddus er mwyn gwarchod eu hawliau mynediad. Gwahoddwyd Band Arian Rhosgadfan i ddod i chwarae a daeth rhwng 400 a 1000 o bobl ynghyd. Yn Llundain, gweithredodd Mrs Lemon, a fu'n rhedeg yr RSPB ers 1892, ar fyrder. Ysgrifennodd delegram yn syth: "The excursion to Llanddwyn must be stopped at all costs. Get police assistance, have written to Chief Constable."

Ar ôl cerdded 4 milltir ar draws y twyni i gyrraedd yr ynys, roedd y gohebydd o Gaergybi yn ddigon balch i adael y lle i'r adar. Ysgrifennodd fel hyn am y profiad,

ar ôl hebrwng y prostestwyr; "For my part the wild birds can remain in undisputed possession of Llanddwyn, and the tide will have flowed and ebbed many, many times before I forget that nightmare journey along the rough cart track which wound for miles along the wild and desolate sand dunes."[4] Yn unol â chais Mrs Lemon, roedd heddweision yno i gadw trefn, a hwythau, yn ôl y gohebydd, yn destun cydymdeimlad wrth iddyn nhw gydgerdded â'r protestwyr yn eu gwisgoedd a'u helmedau trymion.

Protest heddychlon a gafwyd ond erbyn hynny, beth bynnag, roedd yr adar wedi gadael yr ynys, mwy neu lai. Erbyn 1920 roedd y mwyafrif o'r môr-wenoliaid wedi symud yn ôl i Ynysoedd y Moelrhoniaid. Ar ôl i'r ffordd bresennol gael ei hadeiladu i lawr at y traeth, ac wrth i nifer yr ymwelwyr gynyddu, ar y tir a'r môr, doedd fawr o werth mwyach i'r ynys fel gwarchodle i'r môr-wenoliaid. Erbyn 1950 nid oedd modd i'r RSPB gyfiawnhau cadw'r brydles ac fe'i hildiwyd hi gan y Gymdeithas yn 1951.

Pan werthwyd Llanddwyn yn 1974 a'i throsglwyddo, dan brydles, i Gyngor Gwarchod Natur (Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru erbyn hyn), nid yr adar ond y ddaeareg ryfeddol oedd y diddordeb pennaf.

Nid yw patrymau nythu môr-wenoliaid ymhlith y rhai mwyaf dibynadwy a gall aflonyddiad gael cryn effaith ar yr adar. Mae Sir Fôn yn dal i fod yn safle pwysig ar gyfer yr adar hyn er bod y môr-wenoliaid gwridog wedi gadael Cymru yn gyfan gwbl yn ddiweddar. Er bod cyflyrau ar Ynysoedd y Moelrhoniaid yn ddelfrydol ar eu cyfer maen nhw wedi dewis canolbwyntio ar ynys Rockabill, yng ngweriniaeth Iwerddon, ar hyn o bryd. Dyw'r llecyn hwn ddim yn bell, wrth gwrs, o'n harfordir ni ac erbyn hyn mae yno 600-700 o barau. O gwmpas glannau Môn mae môr-wenoliaid y Gogledd, môr-wenoliaid cyffredin a môr-wenoliaid pigddu yn dal i nythu mewn tri chasgliad mawr a dau neu dri o rai llai, mwy anwadal. Ar Ynys y Moelrhoniaid, sy'n eiddo i Trinity House ond sy'n cael ei wardena gan yr RSPB, y mae'r casgliad mwyaf arwyddocaol, gyda 2100 pâr o fôr-wenoliaid y Gogledd a 100 pâr o fôr-wenoliaid cyffredin.

*Mae **Richard Farmer**, Rheolwr Gwarchodfeydd Cymru (RSPB), wrthi'n ymchwilio i agweddau ar hanes yr RSPB drwy astudiaeth hanes llafar. Mae'r ymchwil yn mynd ag ef i bob rhan o Brydain i gyfweld â rhai a fu'n gweithio gyda'r Gymdeithas nôl yng nghanol yr 20fed ganrif.*

Môr-wennol gyffredin a'i chyw / Common tern and chick

Michael Hammett

Terns and Watchers

Ynys Llanddwyn was one of Wales' foremost bird sites in the early 20th century but its tern colonies were regularly raided by egg thieves. For many years the site was guarded by local 'watchers', part of a network established across Britain by the RSPB in its early days, as a practical bird protection measure. The Llanddwyn watchers took their duties seriously, but their attempt to reduce disturbance to the birds caused local upset; in 1938 a 'mass protest picnic' was attended by several hundred people, eager to re-establish their access rights. But by then the terns had largely abandoned Llanddwyn – a trend which was to continue over the following decade. Anglesey continues to be an important stronghold for terns, although roseate terns have recently deserted Wales for Rockabill Island in the Irish Republic.

RSPB

Cyfeiriadau

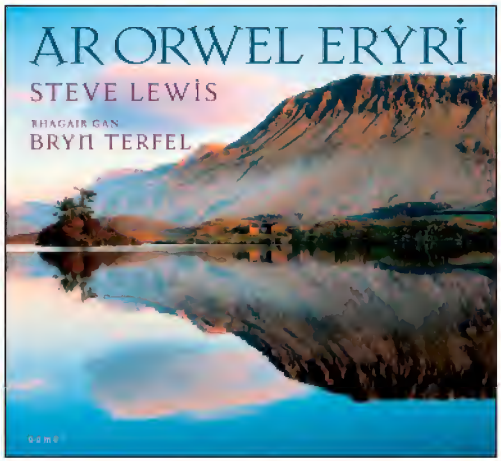
1 Cyfweliad Catherine Roberts. *Ganwyd yn Llanddwyn yn 1901*. Archifdy Llangefni. WM/T/25

2 *O ddyddiadur* (heb ei gyhoeddi) y Parch. F C R Jourdain Mehefin 15 1909. Llyfrgell Alexander.

3 *"RSPB report of the Watchers Committee. 1921/2"*

4 *Caernarfon & Denbigh Herald* 5 Awst 1938.

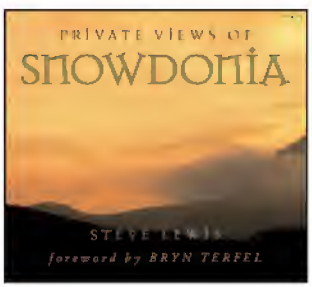
Silff Lyfrau Amgylcheddol



mae'n siŵr, oedd dewis hoff le, ond eto un digon anodd wrth feddwl am y llu o bosibiliadau. Serch hynny, ceir hen ddigon o amrywiaeth gan y cyfranwyr, sy'n ein tywys ar siwrne o waelodion Dyffryn Dysynni a glannau Llyn Tegid, Y Bala hyd at fynyddoedd Cnicht, Y Glyderau, Moel Siabod, Y Moelwynion a'r Wyddfa ei hun.

AR ORWEL ERYRI
Steve Lewis
Gomer 2005 £19.99 Hardback
ISBN: 1-84323-486 6

Daeth y syniad o greu'r math yma o lyfr i'r ffotograffydd Steve Lewis wrth iddo holi pobl leol ynglŷn â llefydd newydd y gallai dynnu lluniau ohonynt. Canlyniad y sgyrsiau hynny yw'r llyfr yma, 'Ar Orwel Eryri' gyda'i luniau bendigedig a disgrifiadau cyfoethog gan 30 o gyfranwyr. Mae rhai o'r cyfranwyr hyn yn enwog drwy'r wlad, eraill yn enwog yn eu milltir sgwâr nhw eu hunain; rhai ohonynt yn rhoi persbectif gwahanol ar le adnabyddus, eraill yn disgrifio mannau mwy anghyfarwydd. Wrth sôn am eu llefydd dewisedig, mae'r cyfranwyr yn rhannu gyda'r darllenydd eu teimladau amdanyn nhw, yn aml drwy ddisgrifio sut y mae'r gwahanol ardaloedd yn gafael ynddynt fel unigolion.

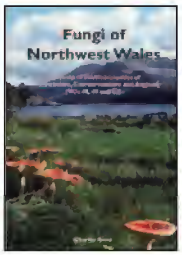


Tasg digon pleserus i bob cyfrannwr, Ceir rhai themâu cyffredin trwy'r llyfr, gyda'r cyfranwyr yn canolbwyntio ar harddwch y tirlun, y golygfeydd, y bywyd gwyllt arbennig, y llynnoedd a'r afonydd ynghyd â nodweddion daearegol trawiadol. Ac yn Nhomen-y-mur, Trawsfynydd, mae Dafydd Elis Thomas yn sylwi ar ein "dylanwad ar y dirwedd dros y canrifoedd". Mae cryn dipyn o sôn am y ffordd y defnyddiwyd y tir ar hyd yr oesoedd, gyda'r cyfranwyr yn tynnu ein sylw at lu o nodweddion sy'n dyst i'n treftadaeth - gan gynnwys chwareli llechi ac adfeilion amrywiol fel hen felin lechi Ynys-y-pandy a Chapel Hebron, Llanberis. Maent yn dwyn ein sylw hefyd at y ffordd y mae canrifoedd o amaethu wedi siapio'r tirlun, ac fel y mae yn parhau i wneud hyd heddiw, wrth gwrs. Cawn ein difyrru ag ambell stori ddiddorol a chlywed sut mae llefydd a chymeriadau lleol Eryri wedi ysbrydoli nifer o'r cyfranwyr. Ceir sôn am yr holl hamddena sy'n digwydd yn yr ardal – megis cerdded, dringo a gwersylla - gyda Gwyn Thomas, ffermwr o Ddyffryn Nant Ffrancon, yn sôn am ei obaith y gall barhau i rannu ei fferm â phobl sy'n awyddus i ddod i'w mwynhau.

Mae'r llyfr ar gael yn Gymraeg ac yn Saesneg, a chyda Nadolig ar y ffordd bydd yn anrheg digon derbyniol i ambell i hosan, buaswn yn tybio!

Glenda Thomas

This book is also available in English, PRIVATE VIEWS OF SNOWDONIA
ISBN: 1-84323-484 X

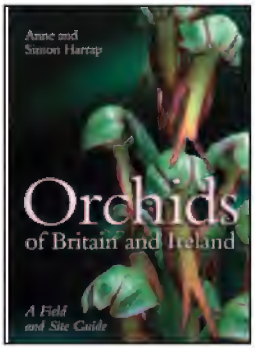


FUNGI OF NORTHWEST WALES
Charles Aron
2005
Privately published

I have received several publications recently which deserve a note, although space does not allow me to review them fully. It is very good news for mycologists in northwest Wales that there is now a 'mycota', as it describes itself, listing the fungi which have been recorded in three vice-counties. Indeed the book is attractively produced, with information on the history, geology, climate, weather conditions and habitats as they relate to fungi. It is available from the author at **4 Refail Field, Pentraeth, Anglesey LL75 8YF** or email **aronmycology@aol.com**

James Robertson

Green **Bookshelf**



ORCHIDS OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND
Anne and Simon Harrap
A & C Black 2005
£29.99 paperback
ISBN: 0-7136-6956-X

ORCHIDS OF THE BRITISH ISLES
Michael Foley and Sidney Clarke
Griffin Press 2005
£45.00 hardback
ISBN 0-9541916-1-7

The orchid literature is bursting at the seams, you might think, but there is room for two more titles as good as these. Along with a gift subscription to *Natur Cymru*, they should solve a few Christmas present dilemmas.

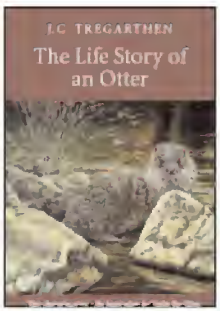
The Harrap book is a gem, which leaves you in no doubt about the enthusiasm its authors have for their subject. So in the introductory description to the common fragrant orchid we read that "it sometimes occurs in large numbers, and the fragrance emitted by a big colony can be quite overpowering, especially in the evening." That tells me that the authors have enjoyed the heady scent of a down awash with fragrant orchids at the end of a summer's day; they want to convey their memories, and awaken those of the reader.

Foley and Clarke have produced a heavy weight volume, literally. The large format and slightly formal style make it ideal for the library. The two volumes have much in common, both following the latest taxonomy, whereby the frog orchid joins the marsh orchid genus, for example, and the green-winged orchid is relocated in the pyramidal orchid genus *Anacamptis*. Both use similar maps showing the distribution of each species. Indeed, both present largely the same information. So it is a wonder that these two books are so different.

Many readers will only want one volume on orchids. For me, the passion of the Harraps' wins out over the scholarship of Foley and Clarke. But both books come with distinctive selling points. The former has a site guide in which to look up orchid-rich places in your home county or one you plan to visit; the latter has chapters on orchids in the garden and orchid photography. The beauty is that we have the choice.

Good books like these on aspects of natural history can fire up the imagination. My first orchid book, the *New Naturalist* title by V. S. Summerhayes, opened a door into a secret garden; either of these books could do the same for a new generation of budding naturalists. And if the decision is still too tough, or the pull strong enough, you can always buy both books.

James Robertson



THE LIFE STORY OF AN OTTER
J C Tregarthen
Cornwell Editions 2005
£9.99 paperback
ISBN: 1-904880-06-1
The revival in the fortunes of our otters owes much to the positive light in which this predator is seen by the public, paving the way for protective legislation and conservation action. The Life Story of an Otter was first published in 1909, and its author was a devout Cornishman who became a Bard of the Cornish Gorseth, and wrote a number of books which displayed clear-eyed observation of, and passion for, the wildlife of his home ground. This book was written with the intention of removing prejudice and improving the otter's image. It certainly helped, not least by providing the inspiration for Henry Williamson's *Tarka the Otter*. This reprint restores an important book to our shelves.

James Robertson

Cymru a'r byd

Ymae Mesur Llywodraeth Cymru ar ei ffordd, a bydd yn galluogi'r Cynulliad i gyflwyno rhagor o ddeddfwriaeth Gymreig - datblygiad sy'n cael ei ystyried gan rai yn gam hanfodol tuag at bwerau deddfwriaethol sylfaenol. Faint yn union fydd yn newid, felly, a sut y gallai fod o les i'r amgylchedd?

Nid yw manylion yr ardrefniant datganoli newydd wedi eu cwblhau, ond y mae'n amlwg y bydd llywodraeth yng Nghymru'n ennill pwerau gweithredol ac yn dod yn debycach i Senedd yr Alban. Y datblygiad gwirioneddol newydd yw'r posibilrwydd y bydd hawl i ddeddfu mewn meysydd penodol yn cael ei drosglwyddo i'r Cynulliad. Byddai hyn yn ei gwneud yn bosibl i ddeddfwriaeth Gymreig osgoi'r dagfa ddeddfwriaethol yn San Steffan, ac yn caniatáu gweithredu mwy buan ynglŷn â blaenoriaethau Cymreig.

Yn amlwg, mae hyn yn ddeniadol o ystyried rhwystredigaethau'r gorffennol a'r methiannau sydd wedi deillio o analluedd y llywodraeth. Yn ystod argyfwng clwy'r traed a'r genau, bu'n anhygoel o anodd i'r Cynulliad ymateb i anghenion Cymru wledig, gan fod y pwerau angenrheidiol yn nwylo DEFRA, a oedd â blaenoriaethau a dealltwriaeth gwahanol. Nid oes unrhyw ddyletswydd ar lywodraeth y Deyrnas Gyfunol i sicrhau datblygu cynaliadwy, felly nid oes unrhyw warant y bydd cyfreithiau sy'n tarddu o Loegr yn parchu egwyddorion Cymreig. O weld gwas sifil yn Whitehall yn edrych yn syn pan ofynnwyd iddo gan un o bwyllgorau'r Cynulliad sut yr oedd ei bolisïau'n hybu cynaliadwyedd, y mae'n amlwg nad yw'r rhai sy'n creu deddfau i reoli Cymru bob amser yn deall y modd y mae pethau'n digwydd yma.

Mae'r Cynulliad yn brin o bwerau hanfodol ar gyfer cyflawni ei ddyheadau am Gymru fwy cynaliadwy, ond nid y Mesur newydd yw'r ateb o angenrheidrwydd. Mae rhai o'r bylchau eisoes wedi eu cau gan bwerau newydd dros drafnidiaeth, a dyfodiad y Mesur Tir Comin hirddisgwyliedig. Efallai na cheir effaith fawr ar gadwraeth natur, gan fod cyfarwyddiadau'n dod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd yn bennaf, ac mae'r Cynulliad eisoes yn meddu ar bwerau gweithredu. Ond mae yna bryder ynglŷn â diffyg adnoddau, yn enwedig gan fod RSPB Cymru wedi canfod achosion o ddeddfwriaeth bresennol a fyddai o les i'r amgylchedd - megis rheoliadau ar gyfer llosgi grug a glaswellt - ond sydd heb ei chyflawni oherwydd diffyg adnoddau digonol yn y gwasanaeth sifil.

Nid yw datganoli wedi ateb pob problem yn yr Alban. Y mae prinder gwneuthurwyr polisi profiadol yn golygu bod y gallu i greu deddfwriaeth wedi datblygu'n arafach na'r hawl i wneud hynny. Canlyniadau cymysg a gafwyd i ymdrechion amgylcheddol y Senedd: buasai camau sy'n torri tīr newydd, megis cyflwyno Parciau Cenedlaethol, yn fwy anodd ac yn llawer arafach heb ddatganoli. Mae safonau mwy caeth ynglŷn â throseddau sy'n ymwneud â bywyd gwyllt, a safonau ansawdd aer, yn arwydd o'r flaenoriaeth uwch sy'n cael ei rhoi i faterion amgylcheddol. Ond o wybod faint o Aelodau Senedd yr Alban - gan gynnwys y Prif Weinidog - oedd â chefndir cadarn mewn materion amgylcheddol, yr oedd Cyrff Anllywodraethol yn yr Alban yn sicr yn gobeithio am fwy nag a gafwyd.

Gan y bydd Cynulliad Cymru'n parhau'n wannach na Senedd yr Alban, pa mor ddynamig ac arbrofol y gall gwneuthurwyr polisi fod? A hwythau wedi cymryd y cam beiddgar o ddatgan bod Cymru i fod yn rhydd o gnydau GM, ac yna wedi gweld un o Weinidogion y DG yn dyfarnu yn eu herbyn trwy gyhoeddi profion cnydau GM yng Nghymru, y mae'n hawdd gweld sut y mae arloesi'n cael ei fygu. Bydd yn rhaid i'r Cynulliad ofyn am reolaeth dros faes penodol, a gallai unrhyw un o weinyddiaethau'r DG wrthwynebu ceisiadau o'r fath - fel sydd wedi digwydd, mae'n ymddangos, yn achos rheolaeth yr Adran Masnach a Diwydiant dros gynllunio ar gyfer datblygiadau ynni mawrion. Bydd polisi amgylcheddol ar gyfer Cymru'n gofyn llais llawer cryfach i Gymru yn Ewrop nag sydd ganddi ar hyn o bryd.

Mae Rhodri Morgan wedi datgan mai bwriad y Mesur newydd yw rhoi'r arfau i'r Cynulliad "ddarparu'r hyn yr ydych yn credu ynddo". Yn hytrach na chael ein gorlethu gan bwerau deddfwriaethol newydd, yr hyn sy'n bwysig yw canfod pa bolisïau sy'n effeithio ar fioamrywiaeth a'r amgylchedd, a sicrhau eu bod yn derbyn y sylw haeddiannol.

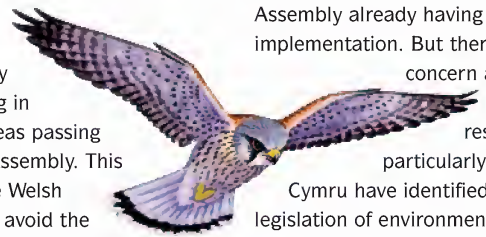
Mae Hannah Pitt yn Swyddog gyda Chyswllt Amgylchedd Cymru, gyda chyfrifoldeb am Wybodaeth ynglŷn â'r Cynulliad

Wales and the world

Hannah Pitt

The Government of Wales Bill is coming and will enable the Assembly to introduce more Welsh legislation, seen by some as a crucial step towards primary legislative powers. So just how much will change and how can it benefit the environment?

Details of the new devolution settlement are not finalised, but it is clear that government in Wales will gain executive powers and become more like the Scottish Parliament. The real innovation is the possibility of law-making in particular areas passing over to the Assembly. This would enable Welsh legislation to avoid the logjam at Westminster, and allow speedier action on Welsh priorities.



This is clearly appealing considering past frustrations and failings arising from government impotence. During the foot and mouth crisis it was incredibly difficult for the Assembly to respond to the needs of rural Wales as the necessary powers were with DEFRA, who had different priorities and understanding. The UK government has no duty for sustainable development so there is no guarantee that laws emanating from England adhere to Welsh principles. Having seen a Whitehall civil servant look blank when an Assembly committee asked him how his policies promote sustainability, it is clear that those producing laws which govern Wales are not always in tune with how things happen here.

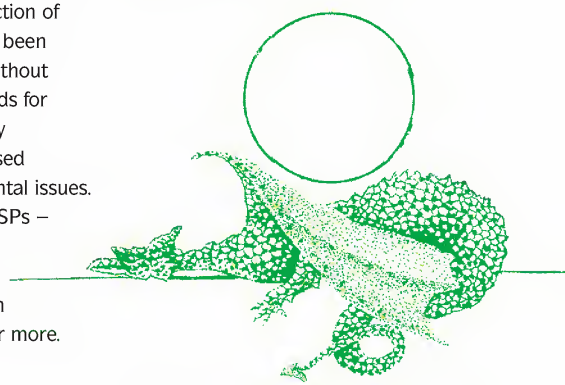
The Assembly lacks powers essential for delivering its aspirations for a more sustainable Wales, but the new Bill is not necessarily the solution. Some gaps are already covered by new powers over transport, and the arrival of the long awaited Common Land Bill. Nature conservation may not be greatly affected as directions come largely from the EU, with the Assembly already having powers of implementation. But there is concern about lack of resources, particularly as RSPB Cymru have identified existing legislation of environmental benefit – such as regulations for heather and grass burning – which has not been enacted due to lack of civil service capacity.

Devolution has not been a panacea in Scotland. A shortage of experienced policy makers has left the capacity to create legislation lagging behind permission to do so. The Parliament's environmental efforts show mixed results: groundbreaking moves, such as the introduction of National Parks, would have been difficult and much slower without devolution. Stricter standards for wildlife crime and air quality standards signal the increased priority given to environmental issues. But given the number of MSPs – including the First Minister – with sound environmental credentials, NGOs in Scotland certainly hoped for more.

As the Welsh Assembly will remain weaker than the Scottish Parliament, how dynamic and experimental can policy-makers be? Having taken the bold step of declaring Wales 'GM free', only to be overruled by a UK minister announcing GM crop trials in Wales, it is easy to see how innovation is discouraged. The Assembly will have to request control over a specific area and a UK ministry could potentially resist such requests, as seems the case with DTI control over planning for large energy developments. Stronger environmental policy for Wales will require the country's voice to be much louder in Europe than at present.

Rhodri Morgan has said that the new Bill is intended to give the Assembly the tools "to deliver what you believe". Rather than being overwhelmed by new legislative powers, the important thing is to identify those policies affecting biodiversity and the environment, and ensure that they receive the attention they deserve.

Hannah Pitt is Assembly Information Officer for Wales Environment Link



Islands round-up

Geoff Gibbs

Skokholm bought by the Wildlife Trust for South & West Wales

Skokholm is being bought by the Wildlife Trust which has cared for it for the last 50 years. The current owners, the Dale Castle Estate, want the 247acre island to be looked after by the Trust, which also manages Skomer. An appeal is being launched, and contributions can be sent to the Skokholm Appeal, WTSWW, The Nature Centre, Fountain Road, Tondu, Bridgend CF32 0EH.

Michael Hammett

Fulmars: in decline in Scotland but doing well on Bardsey

How have our island seabirds done this year?

Everyone must have heard about the population declines and catastrophic breeding failures of seabirds in much of Scotland, especially Orkney and Shetland. Results from the JNCC's Seabird Monitoring Programme for three key species in these areas up to 2004 show the following:

- fulmars in decline since 1996, with very low breeding success particularly in SE Scotland
- kittiwakes in decline since the early 1990s, with almost total breeding failure in Orkney and Shetland in 2004
- guillemots declining since 2001, with a complete breeding failure on Fair Isle in 2004, and a similar story generally in Shetland.

Skomer: good numbers and breeding success for kittiwakes, puffins, guillemots and razorbills. Guillemots on the ledges have increased by a startling 39% to almost 20,000, and the razorbill count was the highest ever at over 5,700. Juan Brown (the warden) asks "Is it possible that the observed increases are a result of influxes of birds from colonies further north and east which experienced total breeding failure in 2004? With over a million birds out there, even if only a tiny percentage of birds moved between colonies a significant change in numbers could be observed."
Large gulls also had a good breeding season, with great black-backed gulls (109 nests) producing 1.4 chicks per nest.

Ramsey: auks were last counted in 2002, but kittiwakes with 228 nests were up from 137 last year, rearing 0.7 chicks per pair; this followed near-total failure last year. The three large gull species all increased in number. About 900 occupied Manx shearwater burrows were found, and now the island is rat-free this species should continue to increase.

Bardsey: Steve Stansfield reports a generally good breeding season for most seabirds. Fulmars (42 pairs) were above the long-term average of 37, and produced 37 chicks. Kittiwakes (365 nests) reared 201 chicks, rather on the low side. Numbers of guillemots (785 adults) and razorbills (2,010) were around or above the average for the last few years; the former had poorer breeding success than recently, but the razorbills did well, with 542 eggs or young found in six sub-colonies.

The general conclusion is that our Welsh island seabirds are doing well at present, and increasing in many cases. However, breeding success is sometimes on the low side, as seen with kittiwakes on Ramsey in 2004 and guillemots on Bardsey in 2005.

Continued monitoring using consistent methods is obviously important!

Thanks *for the above figures to wardens Greg Morgan (RSPB) on Ramsey, Juan Brown (WTSWW) on Skomer, and Steve Stansfield on Bardsey. Counting seabirds on Skomer is supported by JNCC, and on Bardsey by CCW.*

Mammal news

Mammals are notoriously difficult to record and **deer**, in spite of their size, are no exception. Interestingly, a roe deer was sighted by Twm Elias near Plas Tan y Bwlch, in Snowdonia National Park in July. The last record of this species in the area is thought to have been eight years ago, in nearby Rhyd. A year ago it was thought that roe were on the periphery of the National Park, with the odd buck ranging into the park from populations near Dolgellau, Betws-y-coed and Bangor. Apparently mammal species can lie low in an area for many years before they become abundant and regularly sighted, so keep your eyes open, and let Jackie Brinton of the Wales Deer Initiative know if you see one! (walesdeer@aol.com).

Johnny Birks reports a good geographical spread of **pine marten** sightings this year. Here's the pick of the best, with a couple from previous years. Can you add any more? – email Johnny on **johnnybirks@vwt.org.uk**

Road casualty records are needed for The Vincent Wildlife Trust & Mammal Society **polecat survey** 2004-2006 (see main article in this issue). The organisers are very keen to fill in blank 10km squares in the polecat's known range, so please send any records (preferably supported by a body or photo) to **vwt@vwt.org.uk** or ring **01531 636441**.

Juan Brown, the Wildlife Trust's Skomer Island National Nature Reserve Warden, contacted me to say that the **Skomer vole** population, having crashed in 2003 and 2004, appears to have made a good recovery, with good numbers trapped in 2005 and signs of prolific breeding. The cause of the crash is not clear, but disease could well be a factor: other vole populations typically exhibit marked cyclical fluctuations.

I've had a report of three **bottlenose dolphins** in the Menai Strait during August. Wildlife Trust member Tom Roberts' daughter went on a fishing trip from Beaumaris and the dolphins came around their small boat, chasing the bow, and leapt out of the water several times. There were at the time reports of a large herd of bottlenose dolphins in Cardigan Bay. The Captain of the fishing vessel said at the time that this was the first time he had ever seen them in the Strait. They are about four times as large and heavy as harbour porpoises and very distinctive in appearance, so there was no question of mistaken identity.

One of Britain's rarest and most elusive mammals is the **Barbastelle bat**. They have again been recorded from Aberedw in the Wye valley, but only in small numbers and with no hint of there being a resident breeding colony. Good news is that John Messenger has found a breeding colony of Barbastelles in SJ20 in Montgomeryshire.

The Mammal Society's **water shrew** survey is yielding results. Tamasine Stretton of Montogomeryshire Wildlife Trust has found water shrews on the Trust's Pwll Penarth nature reserve. The reserve was once part of the adjacent Newtown sewage works. At the time of the last published Water Shrew Newsletter for the survey, she believes this was the only positive record for water shrew in Powys.

Send your interesting mammal bits to *Frances Cattanach,* Director North Wales Wildlife Trust **fcattanach@wildlifetrustswales.org 01248 351541**.

How Many?	When?	Who by?	Where?	VWT quality score
1	Sep 2005	naturalist	Ystradfellte, Brecknock	7
1	Aug 2005		Edge of Crychan Forest, Cynghordy, Carms	7
1	July 2005	naturalist	Ciliau Aeron, Ceredigion	6
1	May 2005	naturalist	Up a tree above Vale of Ffestiniog, Merioneth	8
1	Jan 2005	naturalist	Cynghordy Carms	6
1	Jan 2005	naturalist	Between Newbridge & Rhayader (Powys)	6
1	Aug 2004	naturalist	Penegoes, SE of Machynlleth	8
1	Autumn 2001	farmer	Near Nantmel in Radnorshire	8

(VWT quality score: 1 least likely and 10 most likely to be a pine marten)

Hysbysfwrdd / Noticeboard

If you would like your wildlife event to feature on this page please contact Mandy Marsh on 01248 385574 or email m.marsh@ccw.gov.uk

The National Trust

WELSH CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

14-16 Mar 2006 *De Valence Pavilion, Tenby, Pembs.*
After the success of the Welsh Conservation Management Conference 2005 in Caernarfon, where many organisations in Wales contributed to content, organisation and financing, the steering group have decided to build on the achievements made there and develop the conference as an annual event. It is aimed at senior reserve managers, wardens, land managers, other conservation management professionals, academics and individuals aspiring to these posts including postgraduate students. **To be placed on the mailing list** to receive further details, or if you are interested in offering a paper or poster on the conference theme, please contact: **Ailsa Newcombe, The National Trust, Craflwyn, Beddgelert LL55 4NG** Tel: **01766 510135** Email: **ailsa.newcombe@nationaltrust.org.uk** Website: **www.craflwyn.org.uk**

OTHER EVENTS

8 Jan 2-4pm *Birds of the Long Mynd* Illustrated talk on the Shropshire Hills. Chalet Pavilion, Church Stretton. Includes afternoon tea. Adults: £5.00, Children: £2.00 **Contact 01694 724536**
9 Feb 10am *Darwin Geology Walk, Shropshire hills.* On the Edge with Charles Darwin and Peter Toghill. Wenlock Edge Car Park. Walk £5.Victorian Lunch at Wenlock Edge Inn £7. **Booking essential. Contact 01694 724536**

HIDCOTE MANOR GARDEN (Gloucs)

27 Jan 10-1pm *Plant Collecting in Johnston's Footsteps.* Lecture and tour with the Head Gardener **Booking essential**. Please bring warm clothing and strong footwear for the tour. Refreshments will be provided.
20 Jan 10am-1pm *Lawrence Johnston - the man and his garden*. Lecture and tour. Discover how diaries and notebooks have helped the garden team learn more about Lawrence Johnston's plantings and lifestyle. Followed by an exclusive winter tour of the garden with the Head Gardener.
Booking essential. Please bring warm clothing and strong footwear for the tour. Refreshments will be provided.
18/19 Feb 11am-3pm *A rare chance to visit the garden in winter.* See the magnificent displays of hellebores as the garden begins to wake from its winter slumber.
Contact **01386 438333 or hidcote@nationaltrust.org.uk**

RSPB

TRIPS

28 Dec 1.30pm *RSPB Conwy Reserve - Field Outing*. Meet in Reserve Car park. Contact North Wales Local Group, **01492 547768**.
15 Jan 8am *Newport Wetlands - Waders & wintering waterfowl.* Booking essential. Contact Joy Lyman **02920 770031**
12 Feb 8am *Forest of Dean visit.* Booking essential. Contact Joy Lyman **02920 770031**

ILLUSTRATED TALKS

20 Jan 7.30pm *Climate Change* – Peter Jones on the latest on Climate change and how the RSPB might tackle it. Lecture theatre 4, UWIC, Cyncoed Campus, Cyncoed Road, Cardiff.
£3 adults, over 60s £2.50, students/under 16s £1
For this and other talks, contact: Joy Lyman **02920 770031**

THE BLACKPILL WILDLIFE CENTRE

See Swansea Bay as you've never seen it before, with hundreds of winter and migratory birds. Enthusiastic volunteers open the centre on alternate Sunday mornings **10am - 1pm**.
Contact Daphne Jones **01269 822876**
2005 - 18 Dec, 2006 - 8, 22 Jan; 5, 19 Feb; 5, 19 Mar; 2 Apr

The Mammal Society

TRAINING COURSES 2006

7-9 Apr *Mammal Identification* - FSC Rhyd y Creuau, Conwy
2-4 Jun *Mammal Ecology & Conservation* - FSC Preston Montford, Shropshire
7 Feb *Dormice and Development* - FSC Preston Montford, Shropshire
7 Mar *Dormice and Development* - Wildlife Trust S&W Wales, Tondu
16 Feb *Radio Tracking* - Avon Wildlife Trust, Bristol
Contact the Mammal Society: **Tel: 020 7350 2200**

IGER

STAPLEDON SEMINARS

Plas Gogerddan, Aberystwyth, SY23 3EB Tel: 01970 823000
12 Jan *Plant pharmaceuticals - fact and fantasy* Professor Mike Fowler, University of Sheffield
16 Feb *Molecular genetics and breeding of cereals* Dr Mark Sorrells, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
16 Mar *A Business Approach to Research* Dr J Neeteson, Wageningen University and Research Centre, Netherlands (North Wyke)
23 Mar *Land use / ecology* Professor Steve Albon, The Macaulay Institute, Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen
6 Apr *Biomass and all that! Tomorrow's fuel, but will tomorrow ever come?* Sir Ben Gill, Head of new Government-appointed Biomass Study Task Force. For information contact Tony Gordon: **tony.gordon@bbsrc.ac.uk**

Wildlife Trust S&W Wales

NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE GROUP

26 Dec 11am *Boxing Day Bird Watch* along the Nevern Estuary.
Meet on Newport Bridge

Butterfly Conservation

BROWN HAIRSTREAK EGG SEARCHES

For further information about events this autumn/winter please contact Butterfly Conservation Wales **wales@butterfly-conservation.org** or telephone **0870 7706153**.

Diolch am y lluniau i / For illustrations, thanks to:
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